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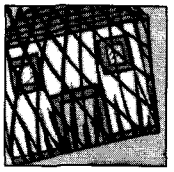

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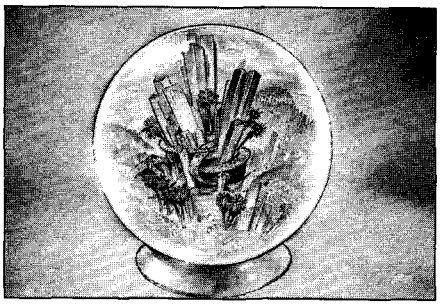

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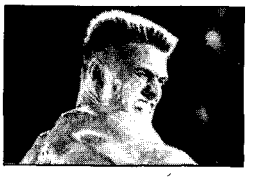

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Cover illustration by Fred Warter

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LETTERS

Shouting Fire in a Crowded Day-Care Center

The decision with whom one should leave one's child is among the most serious a parent must make. As Virginia Postrel aptly notes in "Who's Behind the Child Care Crisis?" (June), this decision is only made more difficult by the presence of government bureaucrats who are convinced that they are wiser and more caring than parents.

Last year I was asked to serve on a state task force on occupancy standards for day-care homes. Of 22 members, I was the only representative of parents (what was labeled "consumers"). The majority were government bureaucrats. The task force focused on safety issues, particularly fire danger.

The number of children killed or injured by fire in day-care homes in Minnesota: zero. The solution: force day-care providers to install hard-wired smoke detectors, insist on mandatory fire drills as part of licensing, give more power to inspectors to enforce "safety" requirements, require two hours of fire safety education for providers, grant more funds and staff to the state marshal and the Department of Human Services, and award state grants to day-care provider organizations. The likely effect: day-care providers will go out of business or will elect to be unlicensed, parents will have to pay more for day care, and the number of children killed or injured in fires in licensed day care will still be zero.

When asked why not give parents the information so that they can make their own choices, one bureaucrat candidly replied, "In my experience, parents just can't be trusted to make the right decisions."

Gary Alan Fine
Minneapolis, MI

Tax That Gas!

Robert Poole ("Everybody's Favorite Tax," Editorials, April) makes the startling statement "that using gasoline tax monies to bail out the government would demolish the user-pays principle that has long been part and parcel of gasoline taxes in this country."

Most of the cost of city and county services to motoring and trucking—police and fire protection, traffic engineering, traffic signals, road repair and maintenance, etc.—is paid for by the property taxpayer. This arrangement saves motorists and truckers the equivalent of an additional fuel tax of 50 cents per gallon. In addition, the cost of real estate and improvements for parking and operation is only partially paid for by the user. This cost may be as much as $15-20 billion for the Los Angeles area alone. The aggregate of these subsidies to motoring and trucking may be as much as the equivalent of $3.50 per gallon.

The user-pays system has *not* been part and parcel of the gasoline taxation policies of this nation. The fuel tax has never been adequate to meet user-costs.

Since 1965, inflation has decreased the tax by a factor of three. While an increasingly inadequate fuel tax has been sequestered into trust funds for the construction of urban freeways, the property tax has had to be increased to fill the gap of local government automobile-related expenses. Interestingly, this explains the Proposition 13 "tax revolt" of 1978.

To complain that an increased fuel tax

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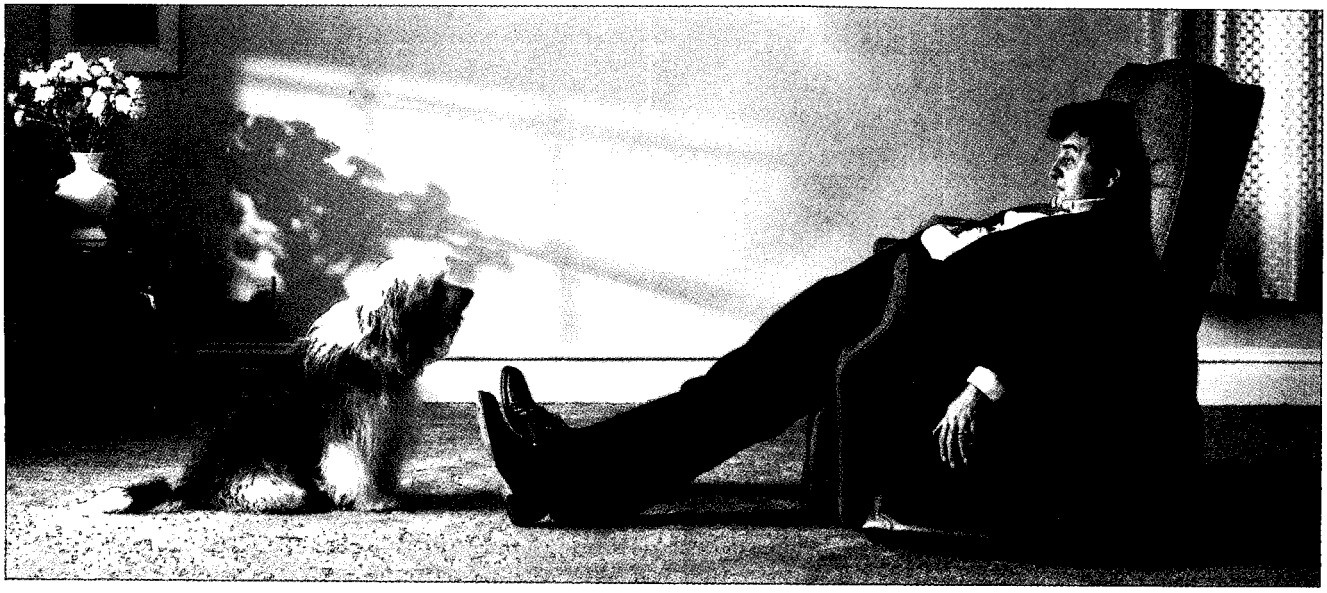

How to solve the energy crisis.

If you're like a lot of people the energy crisis has nothing to do with oil embargos and solar power.

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would discriminate against sprawled cities is similar to the plea of the murderer, who, having been convicted of murdering his parents, argues that he should be given clemency because he is now an orphan. Poole's denial that an increased fuel price would decrease demand will be passed over, mercifully, without comment. I am sure that Milton Friedman and the late Adam Smith will understand.

Stanley Hart
Chairman, Transportation Committee
Sierra Club
Los Angeles, CA

Mr. Poole replies: Contrary to Stanley Hart, I neither stated nor implied that a higher gasoline tax would not limit demand; of course it would. And I agree with Hart's complaint that the present gasoline tax is an imperfect user-pays system. Were highways operated as business ventures (as I suggested), they would have to charge enough to cover all their costs, which is presumably what Hart wants. He and the Sierra Club should therefore be working for highway privatization or at least joining the growing movement for toll roads. What is truly amazing is that an advocate of user-pays could be tricked into supporting a gasoline tax to bail out our spendthrift government, a move which would make a mockery of the user-pays principle.

Color Questions

Michael Konik's piece on the film colorization flap ("Color Me Blue," May) said exactly what has needed saying—that when you sign away the rights to your work, you sign away your rights. Simple.

But after finishing Konik's article I began to consider the legal limbo some musicians now find themselves in. Digital audio technology now permits snippets of one musician's work to be "sampled" by other musicians. No rights are signed away or consent asked. Many rap songs and dance tracks consist of sampled guitar riffs and drum licks with new lyrics layered on. These hybrids sell millions. Is this stealing?

I'm not sure, but using someone else's *performance* for monetary gain certainly merits a close look. If government must conduct some kind of hearing into the rights of artists, here would be a good place to start.

Jeff A. Taylor
Kingstree, SC

MICHAEL KONIK makes two technical errors that originated from a Turner press release:

1. The colorization process has nothing whatsoever to do with the preservation of films in black-and-white nor with their transfer from unstable nitrate film to safety stock. Also, colorizers do not strike new protection 35mm black-and-white prints from which to work.

Any transfer from nitrate to safety film was accomplished long ago (except in the case of some obscure "B" pictures that are not candidates for colorization anyway). Black-and-white preservation occurred when beautiful one-inch master tapes were made off of 35mm black-and-white fine-grain master positives *before* colorization was a factor. These same tape masters are used to make dubs that serve as a skeleton for the computer to colorize. They were the source for good black-and-white copies before these editions were withdrawn.

2. Anyone who has ever turned off the color on a TV to see the film in its original black-and-white has been sorely disappointed. The colorized images have been drastically altered in gradation, contrast, etc. To use Mr. Konik's example of Katharine Hepburn, if her hair is brunette in a motion picture and the colorizers make it blonde, turning off the color does not make the hair color revert to brunette.

Kit Parker
President, Kit Parker Films
Monterey, CA

Mr. Konik replies: The Turner company contends that colorizing movies encourages preservation (I've never seen the press release to which Parker refers, but this claim has appeared in many articles), and Parker contends that it doesn't. Let's assume Parker is right. Now we can safely call those who colorize old movies tasteless and greedy opportunists, not tasteless and greedy opportunists-preservationists. But this is not adequate reason for restrictive legislation. Having never encountered a blonde Hepburn—or for that matter, any other quasi-expressionist colorizing efforts—I've not been disappointed by the television adjustment method. But for those like Parker who are sensitive to gradation, contrast, etc., I suggest going to the video store or local revival house and watching the original.

Life and Death Debate

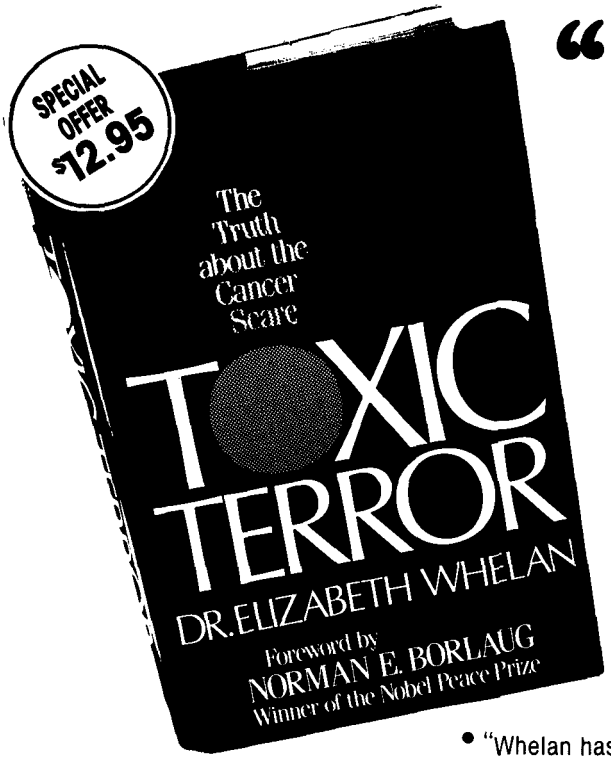
In condemning "pro-choice absolutists," Virginia I. Postrel ("Reconsidering Roe," Editorials, May) profoundly misses the point of the abortion debate. The main issue in dispute is *not* whether a fetus has a right to life; I am willing to grant Postrel's contention that after 20 weeks or so a fetus, having acquired a sufficiently developed brain to ground the rational capacities essential to being human, does become a person and so has a right to life. But this fact alone does not establish the impermissibility of abortion after 20 weeks.

A right to life is a right not to be *aggressed* against; it is not a right not to be killed in *self-defense*. A fetus is not a bystander but an aggressor (albeit involuntarily), and so its right to life does not constitute a right not to be aborted. Just as my right to free speech does not entitle me to demand the use of your property as a forum, so the fetus's right to life does not entitle it to demand the use of its mother's body as an incubator.

Roderick T. Long
Ithaca, NY

I'D LIKE TO ADD a few more facts to the debate that "Reconsidering Roe" will undoubtedly spark. First, any laws regulating abortion must be enforceable. Well over 15 percent of pregnancies end spontaneously almost before they've begun—before the woman knows she's pregnant. How could that zygote/fetus/baby have

"IS IT ANY WONDER QUACKS TRIUMPH ?..."*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any rights protected short of ludicrous invasions of privacy? The law must draw its "bright line" at a point where enforcement is possible.

Second, two of the most popular methods of birth control do not always prevent conception. The pill attempts to prevent ovulation—and thus conception—and alters the lining of the uterus so that if conception occurs, the zygote cannot attach itself. The IUD does not prevent conception at all, but prevents implantation. If legal rights begin at conception, these methods of birth control must be prohibited (guaranteeing a growth industry in smuggling medical supplies).

Third, over half of induced abortions take place in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy, and fewer than 10 percent are performed after 20 weeks. Above and beyond the pregnancies that end in the first week or two, many end spontaneously after the parents-to-be have chosen names and decorated the nursery. Throughout history, these have been personal tragedies for the potential parents: is it necessary to add to their pain with legal action to assure that the fetus was not murdered?

Many, if not most, pro-choice advocates would happily accept a change in the law that defined human life—from a legal standpoint—based on brain life, so that we could move to reducing the need for abortion through better contraceptives and education. Are the anti-abortion people willing to be reasonable, too?

Lou Villadsen
Los Angeles, CA

LIKE MOST COMPROMISE POSITIONS on abortion, "Reconsidering Roe" has the defects of both sides and few of the advantages. We get the government intrusion into our lives (at our expense, of course), and we don't stop abortions.

The brain activity argument does not provide proper justification for saying A is human and B is not. We accept brain death as the proper standard for death because when brain activity ceases, it doesn't restart. If it could simply be turned on again like a light bulb, this would clearly not be a proper standard. Someday we may well be able to do that, but for the moment, it is a reasonable standard.

But the absence of brain activity in the very young fetus in no way means it will not have brain activity when older. Quite the contrary. So just as we do not deem a man in a coma no longer human, we can not call the fetus not yet human merely because of a temporary absence of brain activity.

The fertilized egg marks an event with a clear before and after. It has sharply increased chances to become something nobody would deny was human. So this remains the proper starting point for human life.

Those who value liberty need a justification showing the rights of the mother paramount. Trying to show the child is not human won't do (and is dangerous, as has been shown by other states that have taken to defining humanity narrowly).

David Carl Argall
La Puente, CA

EVEN ASSUMING that a test regarding a physical level of brain development is accurate, it does not necessarily follow that it is the test for the right not to be killed. If cloning were feasible today, conception would still be the "bright line" Postrel says we should look for in abortion. Cloning wouldn't change the fact that human beings begin their lives with just one cell. Uncloned cheek cells would not be individual beings; they would be merely akin to sperm or ova. Cloning would be like conception, and cloned cells would be, like zygotes, human beings at Day One. Using Day One as the test has the virtue that it does not sever human life from human rights.

Doris Gordon
Wheaton, MD

VIRGINIA I. POSTREL is way off when she claims that "To decide whether abortion should be legal, and under what circumstances, we have to come up with a legal definition of when an individual exists and is therefore entitled to the legal protections accorded individuals in a free society. This is a *legal* definition—not a moral, philosophical, or religious one."

This separation of the moral/philosophical/religious from the legal is a myth. It ignores such simple facts as that the Founders learned their ideas about individual rights from philosophical reflections, from moral analysis, and even from religious ideas, discussed in the *Federalist Papers* and the innumerable pamphlets surrounding the Revolution and the ensuing political battles.

Ms. Postrel also fails to give any clear idea of what a "legal" definition is. In the philosophy of law and jurisprudence, when one classifies something a *legal* definition, one points to the fact that it has origin in nothing other than the legal processes within a community—elections, appointments to the bench, arguments based on precedent, etc. A legal definition is supposedly capable of being independent of moral/philosophical/religious convictions. But what the nature of a mature individual is, whether someone whose brain is dead is still a person, and whether a fetus of four days or three months is a human being are all philosophically pregnant issues, incapable of being resolved without recourse to something other than legal processes.

It may be that as our political system stands, abortion does not have full constitutional protection. Neither does unregulated business or sex. But there are aspects of the Constitution that could be interpreted so as to give such protection to individuals. Postrel's loyalty to positivism instead is shameful.

Tibor R. Machan
Department of Philosophy
Auburn University
Auburn, AL

PRIVATIZE ABORTION DECISIONS. Virginia I. Postrel makes it sound complicated, but it's not. *Roe* v. *Wade* should be sustained.

A single ripened egg left to die in a virgin's womb is ample refutation of the right-to-life fallacy, or virginity is murder. Biological life began eons ago. There is no gap, no individual beginning. Conception is not the beginning of life.

The egg and sperm were already genetically unique living human organisms before conception. Conception is no more the occasion for moral absolutism than ovulation or implantation.

The issue is equally clear legally. Postrel correctly separated life from person but did not finish separating philosophical from legal person. A legally defined person exists from a birth certificate to a death certificate. Consider the wrath of the IRS if a "preborn" dependent were claimed on a 1040. Moses did not treat the unborn as a legally defined person, either (Exodus 21:22-25).

Should government, that bumbling postmaster and disastrous drug czar, play God? For those still in doubt about abortion, that is my question. The integrity of the pregnant woman should be trusted. Let free minds in a free market decide.

Craig Dempsey
Liberty, MO

VIRGINIA POSTREL's analysis of the abortion issue was crystal-clear, and her conclusions are right-on. As she argues, the best thing would be for the Supreme Court to return the question to the state legislatures, so they can gradually develop a rational standard for when to allow abortions.

When I first surveyed this problem in REASON eight years ago ("A Calm Look at Abortion Arguments," Sept. 1981), I concluded that "brain viability" at about 28 weeks was philosophically more tenable than any other standard, including the notion of viability based on heart-lung maturity (24 weeks). But, as Postrel points out, while viability is *still* defined (by the American Medical Association) at about 23 to 24 weeks at the earliest, we now know that the brain's structural and functional development allows the "earliest operation of the human brain system critical to cognition and awareness" at just after 20 weeks.

This, I submit, is the best formulation yet of the quintessentially rational standard we are looking for: the beginning of the operation of the human rational faculty. When more straight-thinking people refuse to subordinate fact and reason to ideology and emotion, perhaps the legislatures will take us off the trimester system and onto the semester system.

Roger Bissell
Orange, CA

WHEN SHE SETS UP the issue as "the right to life" and seeks criteria for human-like life—EEGs and the like—Virginia Postrel has already chosen sides in the abortion debate, although I don't think she knows it.

This right to life, like the "right" to a job, an education, medical care, and a minimal standard of living, or the "right" to subsidies, price supports, protective regulation, and military defense, are all at root the "right" to parasitize someone else. And there is no such right without the victim's voluntary consent.

How one accepts such a responsibility is the question that should be asked. It's not sex, unless abortion foes get their way. Passing up an easy abortion in the first trimester might suggest the intent to shoulder such a responsibility. Baptizing the baby used to be proof conclusive; now perhaps it's taking the baby home from the hospital.

Tom Porter
Reseda, CA

I COMMEND VIRGINIA I. POSTREL for her eminently rational editorial on abortion. Her analysis and reasoned arguments are a bright exception in a debate muddied by rabid, polarized absolutists. If the activists on both sides were to stop their screaming fits long enough to consider some libertarian approaches to the issue, there might finally be some real progress toward a solution.

Meanwhile, abortion remains not as a problem in a vacuum but as a symptom of the larger, less tangible problem of unwanted pregnancy. Tackling that will prove even more difficult, but libertarians have an opportunity to make a difference by speaking up now, before that issue too becomes another round of senseless trench warfare.

Glen Feighery
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THE CHINESE REVOLUTION

VIRGINIA I. POSTREL

For the last hundred years, the Statue of Liberty has stood as "Mother of Exiles," the name Emma Lazarus gave her. Throughout this century of tyranny and holocausts, Liberty has signalled safe haven. On these shores, she promises, individuals can breathe free.

It is a noble ideal, one worth waging a long, twilight struggle to preserve. But it is not a very heartening one, this notion of an island of freedom amid a world of oppression.

Nor was the Lady originally intended to mark a place of exile. Her builders were far more optimistic. They gave her a name harkening back to an earlier, more revolutionary ideal. It is "Liberty Enlightening the World."

That ideal was reborn in Tiananmen Square.

The Chinese students who carried models of the Statue of Liberty and erected their own Goddess of Liberty and Democracy in her image did not want to move to America. Their Goddess was Chinese. They claimed liberty not as something Western or American but as the common heritage of all people.

And though they were silenced by guns and tanks, they made a revolution. They changed the way the free world thinks about China, about communism, and about itself.

To Westerners, China has always seemed exceptionally foreign, the exotic East. But the young people in Tiananmen Square overthrew that assumption. On a purely superficial level, they all *looked* like Californians—no more exotic than Michael Chang, who on becoming the first American to win the French Open in 34 years, declared, "God bless everybody, especially the people of China."

The protesters drew on a network of supporters not only in Asia but throughout the United States and, indeed, the world. And, it cannot be said often enough, they asked for the same freedoms the West holds dear—a free press, an independent judiciary, a government of laws not men, checks on the power of the state.

In life and especially in death the students smashed once and for all the idea, much beloved among intellectuals, that communism represents the rule of the people, that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" is a meaningful concept. "The People's Army must not fire on the people," was a futile plea. The People's Republic proved an enemy of its people.

The Chinese students also challenged the notion, to which the right sometimes falls prey, that free markets can long endure without free minds. With commerce come ideas—and, in our day, phone lines and fax machines. Marco Polo's journey to the East changed European history. Trade with the West has changed China, though how radically we will not know for decades.

In an unexpected and unintended way, the Chinese students redeemed America. Americans have gotten cynical over the last 200 years, especially over the last 20. We have grown embarrassed by or ignorant of our own message. We dread being thought earnest. We confuse conviction with cultural imperialism. We suspect that history, and perhaps justice, is on the side of those who promise bread in exchange for freedom.

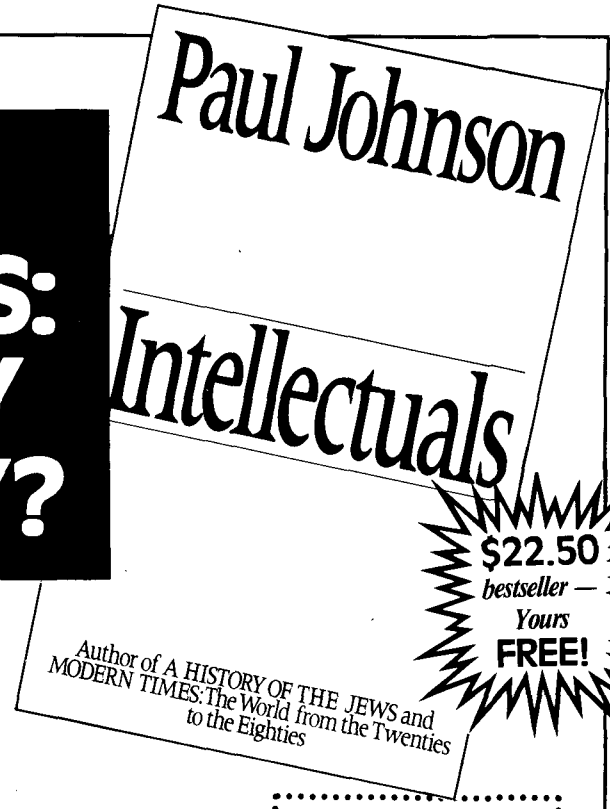
But the young people of Tiananmen Square did not suffer from our malaise. They heard the revolutionary message in the speeches of Patrick Henry and Abraham Lincoln and melded it with their own, tragically innocent, concept of a People's Republic. In their calls for democracy, they echoed the words Americans too often read without understanding:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed,—that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness." It is a pity that George Bush finds such ideas unfit for public discussion.

Claiming the right to alter their government cost many students their lives. Others will undoubtedly disappear into Chinese prisons, as have dissidents before them.

But their actions were those of free people, who chose to act knowing the consequences they might face. In an age accustomed to mere victims, they are martyrs. They refute my college classmate's infamous picket sign, "Nothing is worth dying for."

LIBERAL INTELLECTUALS: HOW DO THEY GET THAT WAY?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Nor was courage confined to the Chinese protesters. Western reporters and especially camera crews braved bullets and threats of bullets to bear witness to what was happening. "Tell the world. Make sure the world knows," countless Chinese told countless journalists.

In a conflict that began with demands for a freer press, the journalists proved themselves worthy of the soaring claims so often made by and for their profession. They showed the world not only what was happening in China but why press freedom matters. Through their liberty, the world was enlightened. And in the dark days that have just begun, the life and liberty of many Chinese may depend on journalists who are willing to stay on the story, not to let the world forget and the prisoners disappear.

The need for refuge remains. The human spirit triumphed in Tiananmen Square, but the students did not. For the time being, Liberty must remain Mother of Exiles. Visas must be extended, the endangered offered protection.

The tragic deaths in Beijing may serve one immediate purpose: they may force Margaret Thatcher's government to offer the citizens of Hong Kong a way out after 1997. Only since the massacre has she agreed to even consider giving the British residents of Hong Kong—3.5 million of the city's 6 million residents—passports that would let them leave the island after China takes over. Thatcher, who talks like Winston Churchill and acts like Neville Chamberlain, may yet come to understand the inhumanity, and the resonance, of abandoning 6 million people to totalitarian rule.

The students' uprising offered hope, however, that democracy may yet come to China—possibly even before 1997. In Los Angeles, as in many cities around the country, an artist built a replica of the Goddess of Liberty and Democracy out of wood and foam. The artist, Tom Van Sant, plans to create a more-permanent monument.

"We'll make it out of Georgia white marble," he says. "And when they finally get democracy and personal freedoms, we'll give one to them."

THE REAL SLEAZE

CHARLES OLIVER

Let's face it, Mark Twain was right when he said that America has no native criminal class except Congress. Now more than ever that is obvious.

But we shouldn't be surprised when we discover that a legislator, especially a high-ranking one, is a crook. The political process rewards those who are most adept at transfering money from the public at large to their friends and constituents. It weeds out honest men. And those it can't weed out, it corrupts. The careers of Jim Wright and Tony Coelho are proof of that.

Jim Wright served in Congress for 35 years, and until the very end, he enjoyed considerable support in his home district. Wright's success in winning reelection stemmed from his ability to funnel huge amounts of federal dollars to his home district. Wright used his power—first as a member of the Public Works Committee, then as majority leader and speaker— to win hundreds of millions of dollars for his Fort Worth district. A 1979 study found that his district got the highest "return" per tax dollar of any in the country.

Wright also used his position on the Public Works Committee to help other members win pet projects for their districts. In 1977, Wright called in his debts and was elected majority leader. In that post, he acted as an unrelenting partisan—with no ideology other than the Democrats are always right and more government spending is better than less. In 1987, his colleagues again showed their respect by electing him speaker.

Tony Coelho was first elected to Congress in 1978. Like Wright, he was an unrelenting partisan who was most interested in gaining and wielding power. As head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Coelho acted as a shakedown artist. He went to businesspeople and reminded them that Democrats controlled the House. He pointed out that his party was in a position to reward its friends and punish its enemies. These businesspeople responded by making substantial contributions to Democratic candidates.

His colleagues appreciated his efforts tremendously. They made him majority whip. And he seemed certain to become the next majority leader and, eventually, speaker.

But within a space of three days in June the congressional careers of Tony Coelho and Jim Wright came to an end, undone by accusations of violating Congress's ethical standards. Yet even as they fell, Congress refused to question the favoritism, shakedowns, and contempt for the law that got them to the top.

The ethics committee didn't even investigate allegations that Wright had intervened with federal regulators to prevent the closing of several insolvent savings & loans in Texas. If the charges are true, Wright's actions helped the S&L crisis grow from a $12 billion problem to a $160 billion one. But his fellow House members decided that wasn't corruption. It was business as usual.

All members of Congress know that to get reelected they have to bring pork back home and do favors for their constituents, and they'll generally compromise whatever principles they have to do that. Rep. Thomas Downey (D-N.Y.), for example, is usually considered something of a dove, often opposing weapons systems the Pentagon wants. But when the Air Force tried to kill the T-46 trainer aircraft, Downey led the opposition, demanding that the Air Force buy an aircraft it didn't want. (See "Beware the Pork-Hawk," June.) Not incidentally, the aircraft was manufactured in Downey's district.

Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Tex.) has a deserved reputation as one of the most fiscally conservative members of Congress. But when his home state was awarded the

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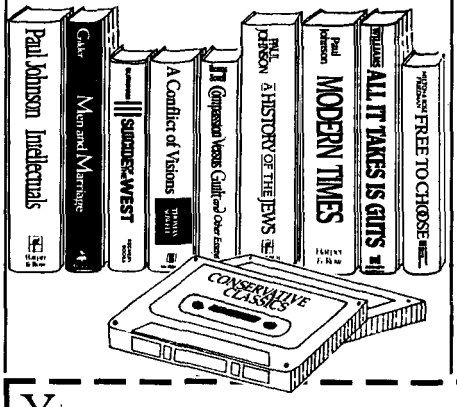

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$6 billion superconducting supercollider, one of the biggest pieces of pork in recent years, Gramm proudly took part in the announcement.

This sort of thing happens all the time. But we shouldn't be too quick to blame our legislators. Representatives who consistently voted against pork for their own districts wouldn't last very long. The voters would find someone who could bring home the bacon.

And if a representative is adept at doing favors for constituents, he not only wins regular reelection but can become a beloved figure. A week after Wright's resignation, Rep. Claude Pepper (D-Fla.) lay in state in the Capitol rotunda. Pepper's biggest accomplishment in his 26 years in the House was taking money from one generation of Americans to pay for the benefits enjoyed by another.

To ascend the ladder of power within Congress, legislators must show that they can help colleagues win spending for their districts. The men and women who become speaker and whip and committee chairmen are the ones who have shown that they will help their colleagues get the spending projects they want. If a legislator consistently refuses to cooperate with the other members, they aren't going to elect him to a position of power.

The system has to be changed. Giving the president a line item veto would allow him to remove pork from the budget. A balanced budget amendment would force lawmakers to choose those programs that are most important, rather than just throwing in each member's pet program. These two measures would remove some of the influences that corrupt legislators. And putting a limit on the number of terms a person could serve would stop legislators from building up 30 years worth of political debts to be repaid.

Until the system is changed, however, we shouldn't be surprised that the people who survive and reach the top are dishonest. In fact, it's surprising to find honest members of Congress. After he spent most of his adult life funneling millions of dollars to Fort Worth, can we really blame Jim Wright for wanting to keep a few thousand for himself?

DEALING WITH SOUTH AFRICA

ROBERT W. POOLE, JR.

This spring two more large U.S. firms—Mobil and Goodyear—pulled out of South Africa. Their withdrawal represents a victory for those whose understandable rage at the injustice of apartheid is expressed in a desire to cut all trade with South Africans.

But that desire is misguided. Given the political forces at work in South Africa, an economic breakdown would likely bring to power the far right who want to restore strict segregation—people who would not hesitate to mow down civilian protesters in the Chinese fashion.

Peaceful change is far more likely to come to South Africa by the continued progress of black economic empowerment, as reported in these pages last month. (See "Quiet Revolution," July.) Millions of upwardly mobile black entrepreneurs, skilled workers, and managers—who are also a huge consumer market—are the key to bringing about legal and political equality.

This is the same process that has begun to occur in China. And it has been fostered by the rapid increase in Western trade and tourism over the past decade. The thousands of Chinese studying in America and bringing our libertarian values back with them; the steady diet of Hong Kong television and consumer products; the explosive growth of fax machines; the obvious rewards of enterprise and entrepreneurship—all this has had major social and political consequences in China, which have not been wiped out by the tanks in Tiananmen Square.

The Bush administration acted very wisely in cutting off only military aid to the Chinese government—but leaving economic interactions free to continue. We can only hope that this policy will be applied to other countries, as well.

Extensive economic and social interactions with free societies will have similar positive effects in South Africa. Instead of sanctions and disinvestment, we should encourage American investment, travel, and tourism in repressive societies. With our fax machines and PCs and MTV, we will liberate South Africa—and eventually, China and Russia, too.

BY THE WAY...

■ Anyone who has ever had—or been—a teenager knows how rough adolescence is. What's true for kids is true for magazines. That REASON survived and flourished is a credit to Marty Zupan, who joined the staff when the magazine was 10 years old and became its editor-in-chief in 1984. Now that REASON has reached adulthood—it turned 21 in May—Marty has moved on to other things. This issue marks her last as editor. We wish her all the best in her new post, as a vice president at the Institute for Humane Studies. And, now that she has had her trial run at raising a teenager, she'll soon get a chance to do it for real. Her daughter, Kate, who grew up with the magazine, turned 10 in February.

■ The Electric Kool-Aid Urine Test? The Navy imposed an aggressive drug-testing program not long ago to keep marijuana-crazed personnel away from the big guns. Drug dealers in port cities now report they're selling a lot more hallucinogenics such as LSD to sailors, since these drugs metabolize quickly and don't get noticed by the tests. Think about an 18-year-old Timothy Leary aiming a 16-inch gun at San Francisco.

■ Letter-of-the-month claims that Hitler had the A-bomb long before WW II but agreed not to use it. He cut a deal that allowed him to move to the United States. A "stooge" died in the bunker. That, we guess, explains why Curly does not appear with Moe and Larry in the later episodes.

■ REASON goes on a month's hiatus after this issue.

Do you suffer from

Tired Libertarianism?

Do you have any of these symptoms?

Are you *tired* of essays that apologize for human liberty, instead of joyously advocating liberty and exploring its possibilities?

Are you *tired* of articles on why free-market garbage collection is better than government-run garbage collection?

When a libertarian publication arrives, do you put it on your coffee table and say, "I'll get around to it, one of these days . . ."?

If you answered "Yes" to any of these questions, you may suffer from *tired libertarianism.*

Hope for the suffering!

Until recently there was no cure for tired libertarianism. The victims of this dread disease had nothing to look forward to but a life of gradually increasing ennui, culminating in intellectual death.

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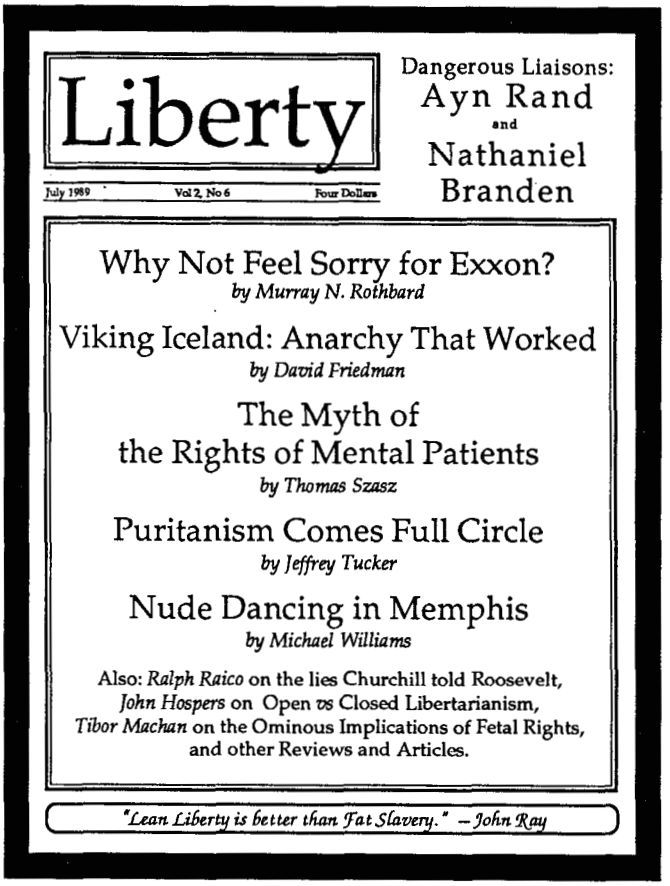
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A Real Dingell-ing

Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) is one of the most powerful men in Washington, and he has acquired a reputation for zealously exercising that power to further his own political agenda. As chairman of

John Dingell: building power, crushing science

the Energy and Commerce Committee, Dingell has single-handedly blocked banking deregulation, led the fight to reimpose the Fairness Doctrine on broadcasters, and castigated business leaders for participation in corporate mergers.

Dingell's latest crusade has taken on the air of a witch hunt. In his quest to establish a federal Office of Scientific Integrity, Dingell has engaged in a protracted attack on one of the nation's leading biomedical researchers. At stake is more than one man's reputation. Dingell's quest could have a debilitating effect on all of American science.

Dingell has set his sights on Nobel Laureate David Baltimore, founder and director of the prestigious Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research and author of more than 400 papers on genetics and the human immune system. Dingell's investigation centers on one of these papers. Last year, during committee hearings on fraud in science, a former postdoctoral fellow at the Whitehead Institute questioned the veracity of the data in a 1986 paper coauthored by Baltimore.

Based on the charges, MIT, where Baltimore is a professor, and the National Institutes of Health, which funds his research, undertook extensive reviews of the work. They cleared Baltimore of any willful misconduct, finding some errors that didn't undermine the main conclusions of the paper. Including the NIH investigation, Baltimore's paper has been upheld by three different peer reviews.

Baltimore's findings, published in the journal *Cell*, could play an important part in the search for cures for lupus, cancer, and AIDS. But Dingell's investigation, says Baltimore, has kept other scientists from using the work, lest they too be dragged before Congress.

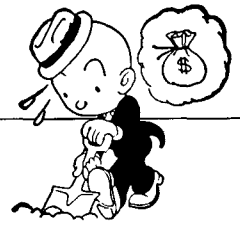
Despite the NIH review, Dingell subpoenaed Baltimore's records and letters, as well as the letters and notes of the many people who have worked with him over the past seven years. And after a year of investigations and charges, this May Dingell finally invited Baltimore before his committee to defend himself. Although the hearing theoretically had nothing to do with crime or punishment, it took on a definite prosecutorial quality. And the inquiry continues.

Some scientists are outraged by the Dingell campaign. David Nathan, physician-in-chief at Boston's Children's Hospital, charged in a letter to Dingell: "Though you may see David Baltimore as a big fish who can attract television cameras to your cause, we see him as one of the most remarkable contributors to patient care we have ever known. An attack on him is an attack on our patients."

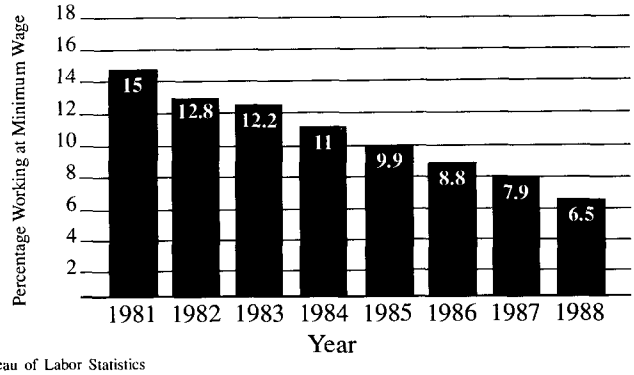
Many scientists worry about Dingell's ultimate goal of regimenting science. Writing in the *New York Times*, Columbia College Dean Robert E. Pollack argued, "Published error is at the heart of any real science. We scientists love to do experiments that show our colleagues to be wrong and, if they are any good, they love to show us to be wrong in turn. By this adversarial process, science reveals the way nature actually works....If we as a country make science a field only for those who enjoy a good lawsuit, we will have shut the door on our future as a technologically serious nation."

—Charles Oliver

Sorry, Senator Kennedy

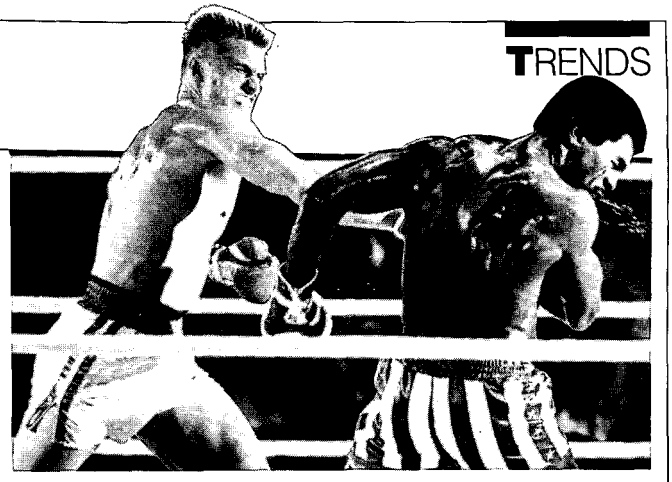


In the 1980s, U.S. companies have created more than 9 million new jobs, but the number of workers earning the minimum wage has dropped from 7.8 million in 1981 to 3.9 million in 1988. Last year, only 6.5 percent of hourly wage earners worked for the minimum wage. Even the percentage of workers earning just above it—up to $4.50 an hour—plummeted from 21 percent in 1981 to 13 percent last year.



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics

The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming



Soviet-American boxing matches are no longer limited to the Olympics—or the movies.

Pull out your wallets, some bar bets are about to be settled. For years, sports fans argued about who would win if heavyweight champion Larry Holmes fought three-time Olympic champ Teofilo Stevenson. Or how the Soviet national hockey team would fare against the Edmonton Oilers. Or how some of those big East German weight lifters would do on an NFL line. Well, we may soon find out.

In March, Sergei Priakin became the first Soviet athlete to play with a North American professional team when he joined the NHL's Calgary Flames. A few weeks later, Soviet officials reached an agreement with American promoters to allow some of their boxers to fight professionally in the United States.

Now that the door has opened for hockey and boxing, basketball will likely be next. Earlier this year, the International Basketball Federation voted to allow professionals to compete in its tournaments. This obviously cleared the way for U.S. professionals such as Larry Bird and Michael Jordan to play in the Olympics. It also removed a major obstacle to Soviets playing in the NBA.

"I would think there is a very good chance of it happening by next season," said NBA Executive Vice President Russ Granik. "The Soviet federation knows the players can play and they can still have them back for the Olympics." And if the NBA goes ahead with its much-discussed European expansion, we could see a Soviet franchise (the Moscow Proletarians?).

The Soviets appear to have two reasons for allowing their athletes to turn pro. First, it fosters the image of openness Mikhail Gorbachev has sought to portray to the world. Second, it brings in hard cash. Soviet officials usually negotiate for their athletes with Western promoters and take a hefty portion off the top for their efforts.

This money skimming doesn't always sit well with the athletes. In May, tennis star Natalya Zvereva defied authorities when she signed with her own agent and announced that she would keep more of her prize money. And when Soviet hockey star Alexander Mogilny defected in May, sources close to Mogilny gave as his reasons his desire for greater freedom, his wish to be with his American girlfriend, and his desire for more money—not necessarily in that order.

Japan is also attracting its share of Soviet talent. This past winter, several Soviet wrestlers made their professional "wrestling" debuts with the New Japan wrestling organization. Once again, the Japanese have scored a major coup, but is professional wrestling ready for real Russians?

—Charles Oliver

Speaking Freely

As if we needed more proof that politics makes strange bedfellows, former Atty. Gen. Ed Meese allied himself—for one day at least—with the American Civil Liberties Union, an organization he once branded a "criminals' lobby." At a May press conference, Meese and ACLU director Morton Halperin condemned the growing discrimination against conservative and libertarian journalists on college campuses.

The press conference was called by ex–college journalist (and former REASON intern) James Taranto to announce a settlement the ACLU had won in his First Amendment lawsuit against California State University at Northridge and Cynthia Rawitch, faculty adviser of the student newspaper, *The Daily Sundial.*

In March 1987, Taranto, then news editor of the *Sundial*, wrote a column criticizing officials at UCLA for suspending a student editor there who printed a cartoon making fun of affirmative action. Arguing that censorship is contrary to the mission of a university, Taranto reprinted the cartoon. Rawitch suspended Taranto for two weeks for publishing controversial material without her permission. (See "Teaching Intolerance," June 1987.)

When university officials rejected his appeal, Taranto and the ACLU sued, claiming the suspension violated his right to free speech. As a result of the settlement, Taranto received $93 in back pay and had the suspension stricken from his transcript. More significantly, the *Sundial* has changed its review policy. The faculty advisor retains the right to review articles only in cases of potential libel, invasion of privacy, or obscenity. And even those decisions may be appealed.

Taranto said that the settlement was both "a personal vindication and a vindication of free speech." But he warned that conservative journalists at other universities faced similar discrimination. Meese cited at least 10 recent incidents in which conservative students were disciplined for expressing their opinions. Neither he nor Halperin knew of any cases in which students on the left had been disciplined for expressing their views.

—Charles Oliver

"Even Russia and China, which manufacture the AK-47, don't allow their citizens to own them."

—California State Senator David Roberti, speaking on KCBS radio in favor of a ban on semiautomatic weapons.

End of the Line

In March the voters of Maricopa County, Arizona, (which includes Phoenix) were asked to approve a half-cent hike in the sales tax. The money would go to pay for a mammoth $8.4 billion regional transportation network, including a rapid-rail system.

Proponents of the plan spent millions promoting it. It was backed by most of the mayors and all of the city councils covered by the proposed system. It was endorsed by the *Arizona Republic*, other newspapers, and a preponderance of civic leaders. There was no well-organized opposition to the plan, only scattered small groups, spending altogether maybe $100,000. It looked as if Phoenix was about to join the ranks of modern cities with rapid-rail public transit—despite mounting evidence that rail systems are poorly suited to serving modern cities.

Imagine everyone's surprise when the voters soundly rejected the plan by a 3-to-2 margin. Some postelection analysts believe voters were uneasy because the plan did not contain enough detail. Train

routes were mapped only vaguely in milewide corridors. Perhaps voters suspected the $8.4 billion price tag might be a lowball estimate. But it's also possible that voters rejected the plan because they had learned from the mistakes of others.

Since the mid-1970s, about a dozen major cities have added trains. Not a single rapid-rail system in the country operates in the black. Planners are notorious for underestimating costs and overestimating ridership. Because they have fixed routes, rail systems simply can't cope with changing living patterns. (See "You Can't Get There from Here," page 34.)

Even in the New York-New Jersey area, long a bastion of train-riding commuters, rail service no longer accommodates many people's needs. New Jersey is rapidly becoming a network of urban centers, rather than bedroom communities feeding into New York City. Jobs are being created twice as fast in the suburbs as in Manhattan, but the state's transportation system still assumes most people want to go downtown—to Manhattan, Philadelphia, or Newark.

As a result, reported a recent *New York Times* article, commuters can no longer depend on public transit. The story described the plight of William R. Wright of Newark, a die-hard train buff and assistant sales manager for a freight company. For 28 years, Wright took a 40-minute train ride into Manhattan every workday. When his employer moved to Fort Lee, New Jersey, Wright's mass-transit commute became a four-hour epic journey each day on a train, then the subway, and then a bus. Finally, he quit his job.

Some planners' first thought is to add new rail routes. But New Jersey taxpayers may be as reluctant as those in Arizona to invest billions in new public transit "infrastructure" that will be obsolete the next time people and businesses inevitably shift from existing locations to thinly populated (hence less expensive) areas.

—Craig M. Collins

A New Mexico

Mexico is moving quickly toward a free-market economy. President Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the 41-year-old Harvard-educated economist inaugurated last December, is cutting government spending, continuing to privatize state-owned companies, and installing like-minded people in key government positions. The big question for Mexico's future is whether these reforms can produce positive results before anything happens to shatter Mexico's fragile economy.

The trend toward privatization that began under former President Miguel de la Madrid will clearly continue and expand under Salinas: the country's two state-owned airlines, Mexicana and Aeromexico, are in the final stages of conversion; the banking system, nationalized in full in 1982, is now split evenly between private investors, the government, and bank executives, who must surrender their stock when they leave their jobs; and there is talk of full privatization of the country's telephone company in the near future. Hundreds of smaller state-owned ventures have already been closed or sold.

As for government spending, Salinas's first budget, already approved by the Mexican Congress, includes real reductions in all items except debt payments. (Mexico's foreign debt amounts to $112 billion, or 75 percent of GNP. The annual interest is around $10 billion.) In addition, new laws enable the executive branch to cut or cancel spending programs in the future without congressional approval. The goal: to bring inflation down from 51.7 percent in 1988 to 18 percent this year and reduce the sizable budget deficit while maintaining at least 2 percent growth in GNP.

Salinas does not plan to accomplish these miracles by himself. He has appointed an economic cabinet composed mostly of thirtysomething, U.S.-educated economists with strong free-market orientations. As secretary of the treasury, he chose Pedro Aspe, 38, who has a doctorate from MIT and has been a major proponent of privatization. As budget and planning secretary, he picked Aspe's long-time deputy, Ernesto Zedillo, 37, who has a doctorate from Yale. As secretary of commerce, he named Jaime Serra Puche, 37, who has graduate degrees from Yale and Stanford, and as comptroller general, 34-year-old Maria Elena Vázquez, who has a strong reputation for tight cost-control and bureaucratic simplification. To add some experience, Salinas appointed, as head of the country's largest bank, Antonio Ortiz Mena, who was the principal architect of Mexico's attempt to create a free-market economy in the '60s.

—Julio Márquez

TERI KLASS

Israel's Press Perestroika

Free-market thought may get a boost in this socialist country, thanks to a recent flurry of foreign investment. Jewish businessmen overseas have acquired several of Israel's major publications, including the extremely influential *Jerusalem Post*.

Robert Maxwell, the British press magnate, began the trend and has become the biggest single investor ever in Israel. Although he has also bought pharmaceutical enterprises, his real revolution has been in the press. He purchased 40 percent of *Ma'ariv*, the country's second-largest daily. He was followed into the market by Arie Genger, a former Israeli, who bought the country's only weekly paper, a left-of-center organ.

The most noteworthy acquisition, however, is a Canadian newspaper chain's purchase of the *Jerusalem Post* for $20 million in May. The *Post*, which is published in English, is extraordinarily influential both within Israel and abroad; many overseas Jews rely on it heavily for information about Israel. Yet the *Post* has been owned by Histadrut, an enormous cooperative controlled by Israel's Labour Party and its socialist labor unions. The *Post* has served essentially as Histadrut's mouthpiece. Over the years, the newspaper has covered Israel's political and economic scene from a definite socialist, Labour Party perspective.

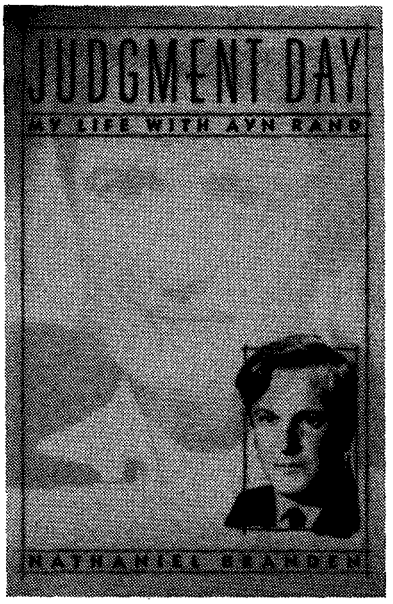
Today, however, Histadrut is in financial straits and is selling off its many faltering enterprises. This amounts to a large-scale privatization effort; Histadrut is so intertwined with the Israeli government that the two are hard to separate.

By contrast, the *Post*'s new Canadian owner, Hollinger, Inc., is associated with free-market causes and publications. David Radler, president of the company, is active in the free-market Social Credit Party in British Columbia and is an old friend of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Hollinger owns the British *Daily Telegraph* and *The Spectator* and *Encounter* magazines—all generally considered conservative publications. It also owns about 200 other periodicals in North America, mostly small-town U.S. newspapers.

In an interview with the *Post*, Radler said the paper would follow an independent editorial line. But, he added, owners "have a responsibility to be aware of what they're publishing and to influence it."

—Oded Yinon, Jerusalem

After 21 years, Nathaniel Branden tells the story of his years with Ayn Rand.



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BALANCE SHEET

Assets

House Cleaning. Jim Wright and shakedown artist Tony Coelho may be out on technicalities, but they're also paying for real crimes—for instance, helping out politically connected thugs. We're talking white, middle-class Willie Hortons gone wilding. Wright's pal John Mack smashed a woman's skull with a hammer and left her for dead. Coelho's more-thorough beneficiary, David Weidert, choked, stabbed, and pummelled a retarded man before forcing him to dig his own grave, then burying him alive. And the Democrats *still* think Horton was about race.

Call Forward. This information economy stuff is for real. Phone lines are to the late 20th century what railroads were to the late 19th. So it's a good thing Ma Bell is dead. If she were running things, fax machines would cost $5,000 and be the size of compact cars. Long-distance rates are down 40 percent since pre-breakup days. Fiber optics replace the old copper cable. That means cleaner transmission, more room for calls, and lower costs all around.

Tokyo Woes. Japanese consumers grow restive. In a poll, 70 percent say they don't consider themselves affluent. The strong yen trades at 120 to the dollar, but it takes 200 to buy $1.00 in goods. Political analyst Taro Yayama, writing in the newspaper *Sankei Shimbun*, attacks a host of price-increasing regulations—from controls on retailing to auto inspections that cost car owners $1,000 a year. "It's time the Japanese consumer got a break," Yayama concludes.

Abandoned Ship. NASA prepares to jetison the space station if it has to make big budget cuts. Sen. Barbara Mikulski, who chairs the relevant committee, says the cuts are coming. McDonnell Douglas fights back with feel-good commercials featuring a space-suited baby. When they bring out the babies, you *know* they're desperate.

Liabilities

Deja Vu. Aargh! The '70s are back! There are giant smiley faces in the store windows. Ralph Nader is on the rebound. So is Jerry Brown. So, most amazingly, is Jimmy Carter. Washington is ethics-obsessed (not to be confused with ethical). Ecology is in; entrepreneurship is out. Can stagflation and disco be far behind?

Failing Grade. "Educators," notably EdSec Lauro Cavazos, fixate on dropout rates. Granted, dropouts provide a nice, numerical measure—but of what? Few experts notice that warm bodies do not an education make. The kids have to learn something. If they don't, they're better off elsewhere.

Bad Medicine. National health insurance gains business allies. Lee Iacocca gripes that he pays $700 per car in health insurance. GM paid $275 million last year for prescriptions alone. Spreading the cost via taxes will only hide it, however. And forcing all companies to spend freely on health insurance, as Teddy Kennedy proposes, will only make things worse. When something looks free, as health care does to most insured patients, people demand near-infinite amounts. And prices skyrocket.

No Joke. Marty Schiffenbauer, the man behind Berkeley's rent control law, pushes an initiative to limit house prices. They'd be forbidden to rise faster than the national average; last year, that was 6 percent, compared to 35 percent in Berkeley. Homeowners constitute only a third of the town's voters, so Schiffenbauer—who is completely serious about this—thinks an initiative would pass. And don't expect the courts to knock it down.

—Virginia I. Postrel

Quayle Comes Home to Roost

Before entering politics, Dan Quayle worked in his family's newspaper business in Indiana. No one was really shocked, therefore, when he accepted an invitation to speak before the National Press Club for National Freedom of Information Day. But, judging from an article in the Society for Professional Journalists' magazine, *The Quill*, Quayle's strong defense of press freedom surprised some members of the audience.

"I come from a First Amendment family," said Quayle, whose grandfather, Eugene Pulliam, cofounded the SPJ. "I'm convinced that a strong, vigorous, and skeptical press is vital to the health and well-being of American democracy—even though some might say it hasn't always contributed to the health of my own political career."

Quayle's record in Congress, noted *The Quill*, seems to bear out his commitment to press freedom. In the House, he introduced legislation to overturn the *Zurcher* v. *Stanford Daily* Supreme Court decision that allowed broad searches and seizures in newsrooms. Later, in the Senate, he worked to overturn a Reagan administration National Security Decision Directive requiring prepublication review of writing by persons with access to certain classified documents.

Quayle told the audience that "too much government information is classified." The public, he said, would appreciate the nation's defense needs "if more data that need not be classified were declassified and released."

—Charles Oliver

FYI

Groups or individuals mentioned in this month's Trends:

Student Press:
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CITY OF DREAMS

BY VIRGINIA I. POSTREL

NO POLITICAL ISSUE IS MORE IMPORTANT to the future of the United States than how Los Angeles will deal with its growth. This sounds both wildly exaggerated and highly parochial, but it is nonetheless true.

The United States is in the midst of an intellectual guerrilla war over what sort of country it is going to be. The engagements are scattered, the attacks furtive. But the stakes are high: Will America continue to allow individuals to shape their own identities and carve out new opportunities, even when that entails the disruption, the "creative destruction," that change brings? Or will it try to fix the present like a bee in amber, to preserve today's look and feel and social arrangements even if that means sacrificing tomorrow's ability to fly? Will we trust the creativity of individuals to create decentralized, spontaneous orders—"miracles by accident"? Or will we turn over our lives to the experts, to be planned and padded and insulated from all risk and all rewards?

This struggle comprises many issues. It incorporates the debates about safety, liability, and new technologies; about industrial policy; about immigration; about education and credentialism. But for most people, the most important clashes are taking place over local issues—particularly over how much regulators will control what people do with their property and, as a result, how cities will be allowed to grow.

In this struggle, those who capture Los Angeles will very likely capture the nation. L.A. is the biggest prize because of what it is and of what it represents. It is the country's fastest-growing city, adding four times as many people each year as number-two Phoenix. It has already supplanted New York as the country's biggest manufacturing center and its largest port. Within decades, it will be the most populous city. It is the center of the nation's two largest export industries—aerospace and entertainment—and the capital of the Pacific Rim. And it is the leading example of the new, post-European city: a decentralized collection of "urban villages," rather than a center city surrounded by suburbs.

But Los Angeles is also something less tangible and more meaningful. It is the city of dreams—of Hollywood, yes, but of older dreams, as well. Los Angeles still holds out the American promise that you can build a new life in a new land, unbound by the constraints of connections or class. One out of eight foreign-born Americans lives here. Most of the rest of us are immigrants from somewhere east. The American frontier, with all its possibilities and all its excesses, ends on the shores of the Pacific.

Southern Californians know that what they have is precious. But those who have been here for decades miss what they once had—big-city living standards without big-city hassles. They want to drive without traffic and park without searching. They don't want tall buildings blocking the sun or the view. They fear crime and crowds. They don't want L.A. to become New York.

Growth hurts. The new dreamers make life less pleasant for the old. But those who want to stop growth by decree would doom Los Angeles to the very fate they fear. New York has exactly the kinds of central planning and controls advocated by those most afraid of turning Los Angeles into the Big Apple, West. And those regulations are what make New York such a twisted place. In a city where the rules are made to be brokered, the Donald Trumps who know how to manipulate the system become fabulously wealthy. The anonymous landlords and shopkeepers and business owners who naively trust in justice and property rights become victims.

> It cannot be repeated too often: nothing is more fertile in marvels than the art of being free, but nothing is harder than freedom's apprenticeship. The same is not true of despotism. Despotism often presents itself as the repairer of all the ills suffered, the support of just rights, defender of the oppressed, and founder of order. Peoples are lulled to sleep by the temporary prosperity it engenders, and when they do wake up, they are wretched.
>
> — de Tocqueville

"It is certain," noted Tocqueville, "that despotism brings men to ruin more by preventing them from producing than by taking away the fruits of their labors; it dries up the fount of wealth while often respecting acquired riches." In such a system, lawlessness rules.

If Southern Californians, in trying to end traffic jams and abolish smog, turn their future over to the central planners, they will destroy their promised land. Trust in individual choices has made Los Angeles flourish. Riddle it with regulations, give faceless planners dictatorial powers, and in place of democracy, we will have the aristocracy of pull. And as Los Angeles goes, so will go Atlanta, and Phoenix, and Orlando, and Miami, and all the other places where dreams survive.

This issue of REASON is dedicated to the proposition that what happens in Los Angeles matters as much to America as what happens in Washington—and that L.A. can cope with its problems without resorting to despotism. ■

Associate Editor Virginia I. Postrel is the special editor of this issue.

BY DEFAULT MIRACLE

WHY THE CITY OF ANGELS WORKS

BY JOEL KOTKIN

VLADIMIR VOLOKH HAS SEEN the planned future—and knows it doesn't work. As a computer scientist in his native Kiev, he labored under conditions dictated by the state, down to his salary and ideologically "correct" technology. Frustrated with both the system and the pervasive anti-Semitism in his native country, Volokh emigrated to America in 1975, ultimately settling in Los Angeles.

At first, it wasn't easy. Barely speaking English, he commuted two hours each way by bus to his $3.50 an hour job as a low-level programmer. But if Vladimir was having a hard time, his son, Eugene, thrived in the new environment. Coached by his mother, Anne, who had taught English in the Soviet Union, Eugene developed into a technical prodigy, graduating at age 15 from UCLA.

Along the way, Eugene developed a complex software-protection program for use with Hewlett-Packard minicomputers. Using this program as its basis, in 1980 the family formed Vesoft—with Vladimir as president, Eugene as top technologist, and Anne serving as bookkeeper for the venture while running a movie magazine on the side. Today the company enjoys over $5 million in annual sales, and last year *Inc.* magazine ranked it among the 500 fastest-growing small private companies in America.

"In Russia," Vladimir recalls, "planning and ideology gets in the way of technology. But when I got to L.A., it was amazing to see that people do what they want here. In Russia, if you're an engineer, your life is set. People come here to do what they want."

LIKE THE VOLOKHS, millions have immigrated to Los Angeles, a city that one out of eight foreign-born Americans now calls home. And to a remarkable degree, immigrants have succeeded here with precious little intervention from government. Rather than a triumph of organization and planning, Los Angeles, as the late futurist Hank Koehn once put it, represents a "miracle by default."

To a large extent, however, this is a miracle little appreciated or understood by the leading lights of the Northeast-dominated media. Part of the problem lies with the chaotic nature of the Los Angeles economy. Unlike the "technopolis" model so beloved by public policy types in Europe, Japan, and the United States, there is no real university-led high-tech sector, as in Boston or the San Francisco Bay area. There also is no local industrial policy, just an efficient city-owned water and power grid—and the increasingly congested freeways—providing an infrastructure for entrepreneurs; but no direction, or coercion.

Prejudice also plays a part in the failure to recognize L.A.'s economic dynamism. Many ignore the power of the real L.A. because it violates their conventional view, which remains that of "Tinseltown." Los Angeles–based reporters for eastern media, for instance, often are hounded into churning out fluff pieces about the entertainment industry and the usual array of "California nut" stories. The idea that Los Angeles should be covered as a major, perhaps *the* major, economic center of the continent is regarded as too absurd to even consider.

For instance, Los Angeles is now the nation's leading manufacturing center—it has twice as many factory jobs as New York—but few national media assign reporters to cover the city's burgeoning industrial sector. "As far as my bosses in New York are concerned, industry is something that takes place in the Midwest or New England," one national network producer complains. "I suggest we cover something like the garment or specialty steel business here, and all I get is a little pat on the head."

Much the same pattern holds for technology. Reading the *New York Times, Wall Street Journal,* or even *Forbes,* one would suspect that the nation's high-technology industries are centered in the Boston and Silicon Valley areas. Yet in reality Southern California leads its northern neighbor in nondefense high-technology employment and sales; it produces more than twice as much, measured in sales, as the much-ballyhooed Boston area.

Another reason the public policy elites reject or ignore this model is that the highly decentralized pattern of Los Angeles growth violates their traditional views about economics. Taking the Galbraithian point of view, they see "real" economies as dominated by giant corporations, labor unions, and other "organized" interest groups. But L.A. is not like New York, Chicago, or even Cleveland. It has relatively few Fortune 500 companies, the kind that are easy for the Wall Street–oriented business media to follow.

Los Angeles's real strength lies with people like the Volokhs, entrepreneurs who start out with an idea and build their own companies. Its rate of new business formation is nearly 30 percent higher than New York's. And in 1988 Los Angeles County boasted 8 companies on the *Inc.* list of the nation's 100 fastest-growing public companies and a remarkable 24 of that magazine's 500 fastest-growing private firms. New York, in contrast, generated only three of the public and six of the private firms on the *Inc.* lists.

Boosted by these small, growing firms, Los Angeles will pass New York as the nation's premier economic region by the year 2000, producing more than twice as many new jobs, predicts the U.S. Department of Commerce. Even in finance, Los Angeles is catching up. Between 1980 and 1985, deposits in L.A.'s banks and thrifts jumped 60 percent while those in New York declined. "This is where the future will be exciting,"

predicts Citicorp Vice Chairman James D. Farley, who is based in Los Angeles.

FARLEY, AMONG OTHERS, believes that the largest factor in L.A.'s favor grows out of its close ties to both Asia and Latin America. One part of this connection lies in demographics. Today only one-fifth of the Los Angeles area's population is of Northern European descent. By the early 21st century, nearly three in five people living here will be nonwhite.

Many view this minority upsurge with alarm. But in economic terms, immigration has been a strong factor in L.A.'s growth. Hispanics, for instance, are a key to the city's rapid industrial expansion, holding down half the city's manufacturing jobs.

Latins also contribute as consumers and entrepreneurs. Last year, for instance, their purchasing power was *larger* than that of metropolitan St. Louis. Already there are 30,000 Hispanic-owned businesses in Los Angeles County, the most of any metropolitan area in the nation, with sales in excess of $1.7 billion.

The impact of the other major immigrant group, Asians, has also been profound. Southern California boasts the largest Asian population in North America, with more than 1.2 million people from the various Pacific countries. This is more than twice the number in the San Francisco area and three times that of New York. Their economic and technological contributions have far outweighed their numbers. From the Koreatown section near downtown to suburban Monterey Park, Asian entrepreneurs have been doing their own ad hoc form of "urban renewal," turning once tepid or even crumbling neighborhoods into thriving commercial centers.

"Immigration is increasingly the key, and Los Angeles has both the immigrants and their trade," notes George Sternlieb, regional growth expert at New Jersey's Rutgers University. "There's nothing wrong with New York that one million Chinese wouldn't cure."

"Los Angeles is the future of America," says a Japanese investor. "Business is more dynamic here than in Tokyo."

The presence of these large Asian populations also has solidified Los Angeles's position as the chief *entrepôt* for trans-Pacific trade. No other region in the nation has benefited more from the upsurge in Asian trade—which now accounts for over 50 percent more trade than U.S. trans-Atlantic commerce. Already Los Angeles is the nation's leading port city, outstripping New York in dollar volume. And this pattern should accelerate in the 1990s, when trade with Asia is projected to grow to twice that with Europe.

And there is no doubt that Asians have decided to make Los Angeles the "eastern capital" of the expanding Pacific economic zone. Korean and Taiwanese companies are heavily clustered in areas of both Los Angeles and Orange counties. And leading Japanese firms, including 8 of the 9 leading automakers and 5 of the 13 largest banks, have made Southern California the chief base for their U.S. operations. Today nearly 600 Japanese firms operate in Los Angeles, almost

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twice as many as in New York.

"Los Angeles is the future of America," explains Tagayi Kobiyashi, president of Shuwas Investment Company, a firm with over $2.8 billion in American real estate, 70 percent of which is in Los Angeles. "It is the city with the greatest possibilities. Business is more dynamic here than in Tokyo."

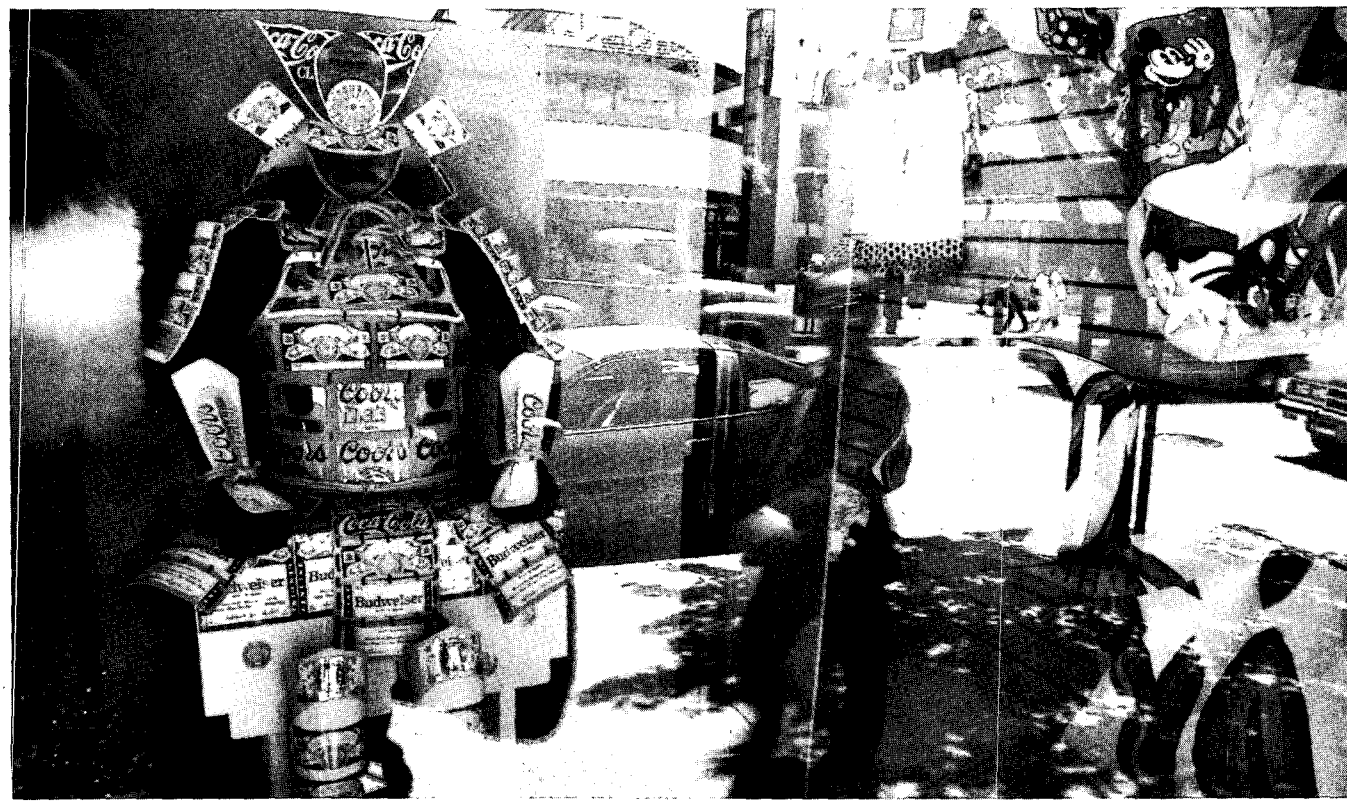
SUCH ATTITUDES HAVE HELPED create a mood among Los Angeles leaders in sharp contrast to the sort of angst about Asia now common among eastern elites. Many Southern California business people regard Asia's ascendancy not as a threat, nor merely as a chance to make money, but as an opportunity to seize national economic leadership.

L.A.'s economy is little understood by the leading lights of Northeast-dominated media.

"Los Angeles is a very laissez-faire city," explains Jack Kyser, chief economist for the Los Angeles–area Chamber of Commerce. "It's okay to make money any way you can, as long as it's more or less legal. I guess we've still got the animal spirits about business. There's a touch of the *bandito* in all of us, and we see the Japanese as people out to make a buck and so are we, a match made in heaven." In many ways, this receptivity to the Japanese reflects a long-standing faith—going back to the turn-of-the-century dreams of such early city fathers as *Los Angeles Times* publisher Harrison Gray Otis and railway magnate Henry Huntington—that the city's "manifest destiny" was inextricably linked with the growth of Asia.

And certainly Asian trade helped make Los Angeles's economy during the 1980s arguably the most dynamic of any major city in the advanced industrial world (growing at nearly a 4 percent annual clip through the 1980s). In the 1990s this outside stimulus, combined with an almost unbridled individualist spirit, will see Los Angeles's emergence, whether the eastern establishment likes it or not, as the next economic capital of America.

Joel Kotkin is West Coast editor of Inc. *magazine and coauthor, with Yoriko Kishimoto, of* The Third Century: America's Resurgence in the Asian Era *(Crown).*



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ANOTHER POINT OF LIGHT

VANS ACROSS AMERICA

BY CRAIG M. COLLINS

WHILE CITY OFFICIALS HUDDLE with scores of ivory tower urban planners and professional environmentalists to come up with new things they can ban in the name of ending smog and traffic congestion, Mitchell Rouse is running an extremely successful private transportation business. "We get a million cars a year off the road," he estimates. If anything, that casual estimate is low, since customer polls indicate that most of the 400,000 passengers carried by his company each month formerly drove to the airport.

Rouse was running a taxi business seven years ago when a ski tour company asked if his taxis, at some discounted price, could transport its customers from Los Angeles–area beach communities to a chartered plane at the airport. "It became clear to us that this need wasn't isolated to this ski tour," says Rouse, "that this was going on 24 hours a day, seven days a week. We got a hold of some statistics from the airport that showed at any given hour of the day there were literally hundreds of people going from the South Bay neighborhoods to LAX, unbeknownst to each other. It wasn't hard to envision that if you could link these people together, you could provide a shared-ride service."

This simple idea became SuperShuttle International, Inc., a private company that has seen its annual revenue soar since 1984, according to Rouse, from $2 million to $50 million. Although there are now over 30 companies offering similar services, he figures his company carries about 5 percent of all airline passengers in L.A. In addition to serving five airports around Los Angeles, SuperShuttle now operates in San Francisco, Phoenix, Dallas/Fort Worth, and Miami. Soon the company hopes to serve Washington, D.C. and other cities. Rouse leans back on an L-shaped sofa in his four-car-garage-sized office near the airport and enjoys stating the obvious: "We're growing pretty fast."

SuperShuttle was not the first company to offer shared-ride airport service in Los Angeles, but it has succeeded famously because it is run well. Friendly, uniformed drivers in blue-and-yellow SuperShuttle vans pick up air travelers at their homes—making not more than three stops—and then whisk them to the airport. After dropping their passengers, the drivers, each assigned to a sector of the city, cruise around the airport until the command center tells them where to find passengers seeking rides into their sectors.

During peak hours, the SuperShuttle command center keeps almost 200 vans in play with the help of a sophisticated, tailor-made computer software program. Drivers no longer receive pick-up instructions from their radios. They simply read liquid-crystal display screens mounted on their dashboards. Although passengers must be ready an hour and a half before their flight leaves, SuperShuttle does get them to the airport on time. "The rap on L.A. is that nobody will use public transit," Rouse says. "That isn't true. They'll use it if it works."

While services such as SuperShuttle somewhat alleviate traffic problems, Angelenos by and large have not cured their addiction to the automobile. On an average day the streets of L.A. are best described as sclerotic. SuperShuttle drivers know this as well as anyone. On one wall of the driver training room is a map of the greater Los Angeles area that any commuter would give his or her car phone to see. Overlaid on the map is a red, spidery network of the fastest-moving streets between any two points, compiled from the collective experience of the drivers in dealing with L.A.'s notorious traffic. "We pretty much stay off the freeways," says Shift Manager Doug Thomson.

All kinds of ideas have been proposed as solutions to L.A.'s traffic problem: a special gas tax, double-deck freeways, converting to toll roads, limiting the number of cars per household, installing trains that will run down the center of existing freeways. Rouse shares the belief that something must be done to relieve congestion and air pollution. He resents, however, city planners' "general attitude of nonencouragement of privately provided shared-ride transportation while at the same time they are wringing their hands over how they can be doing more from the governmental side of it."

Rouse finds this attitude of nonencouragement reflected chiefly in taxes. As a "common carrier," SuperShuttle pays 1 percent of gross revenue to the state public utilities commission. Last year it paid $1 million to the city-owned airport (although this fee has come down slightly this year). And now city authorities may impose a business license tax that would cost SuperShuttle "several hundred thousand dollars a year," estimates Rouse.

"Everybody's got their hand out," he complains, "while at the same time, for publicly provided transportation, they're throwing money at it. They're highly subsidizing that." When taxes are raised, "we've got to pass this through," notes Rouse. But "they're going to make it so expensive there will be a *disincentive* to share rides."

He figures that wouldn't be very smart. "There aren't very many success stories for nonsubsidized shared-ride transportation. There have been a lot of attempts of people out there trying to create carpools and all these other things." But SuperShuttle and its competitors, "in spite of regulation, in spite of taxation, created a private enterprise that gets people *of their own volition* to leave their cars at home."

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Craig M. Collins is assistant editor of REASON.

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THE GROWTH BROKERS

BY STEVEN HAYWARD

IF THE MARKETPLACE RESPONDS to the price signals of supply and demand, then behold the following mystery: at the end of 1988, the median price of a home in California had soared to $172,000—more than twice the national median. Only one in five California households earns sufficient income to afford this home, and tales are rampant of moderately priced housing developments selling out in a few hours, often after buyers camp out several nights at the sales office.

In the face of these stratospheric prices, the basic intuition you develop in Econ 101 would lead you to expect suppliers to build more new houses, especially affordable houses. Yet housing starts in California are expected to *decline* sharply in 1989, from 230,000 units in 1988 to less than 200,000. That would make the third straight annual drop.

The simple truth is that there is a drastic housing shortage—a shortage deliberately created by the increasingly severe obstacles to growth imposed by all levels of government. The panoply of zoning restrictions, environmental reviews, building fees (exceeding $20,000 per home on the average in many places), and other planning regulations has come to act as a hidden tax on homebuyers and as a penalty for prosperity. Meanwhile, the source of these penalties—the slow-growth movement—has been rapidly gaining strength.

The debate over growth in California takes place in an eerie, almost Kafkaesque, context. The slow-growth movement has enjoyed remarkable success because it attracts virtually no principled opposition. Not a single politician or builder will speak out in favor of growth or criticize the movement. If you do mention property rights, as I have on many occasions, you will be greeted with embarrassed or bizarre expressions, as if to suggest that you really must learn better public manners.

Local governments are retreating under pressure from slow-growthers; meanwhile, the potential opposition of the building community is being muted by the subtle changes in the market that growth restrictions create. The slow-growth movement has hit upon a strategy that is so brilliant and so successful that few recognize or understand it. It has a found a way to lose elections and still get what it wants.

SLOW-GROWTH POLICIES have long been in effect in many parts of the state, especially in the liberal-leaning San Francisco Bay area, but 1988 was the first time the slow-growth movement targeted the large, prosperous, and generally conservative regions of Southern California. Slow-growth initiatives qualified for the ballot in Orange, San Diego, and Riverside counties. Growth became the dominant, and often the only, issue in many city council and county supervisor races.

Most initiatives would have established numerical limits on building permits. The Riverside County measure, for instance, called for the population to grow no faster in the county than in the state as a whole. Of course, since freedom of movement remains a basic American right and the government doesn't regulate the number of kids people can have, population can't be limited directly. But reducing the number of buildings, particularly houses, that serve new residents can have the same effect; the shortage of houses pushes prices up, making an area less attractive to new residents. Since Riverside County is growing twice as fast as the state, the initiative would have cut by half the number of building permits granted. It would also have required an additional 10 percent reduction if traffic congestion did not improve.

By contrast, the Orange County initiative wouldn't have imposed numerical limits. Instead, the 10,000-word measure would have tied permission to build to a host of very specific local conditions, the most prominent of which had to do with traffic flows. Such conditions would have made new construction next to impossible. The initiative also called on the county to require local companies to draw at least half their employees from Orange County residents. In this, the preeminent bastion of conservative votes (and money) in California, a January 1988 poll found 80 percent in favor of the slow-growth initiative on the June ballot.

HOW SLOW GROWTH CAME TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA... WHO PAYS AND WHO PROFITS?

With their backs against the wall, major developers funded multimillion-dollar campaigns against these initiatives. They managed narrowly to defeat the Orange County measure by convincing voters that it would make traffic congestion even worse. Builders scored victories by even larger margins in the November election in Riverside and San Diego counties.

AS 1988 ENDED, builders were feeling rather chipper, believing that they had turned the tide against the slow-growth movement. But the electoral victories merely concealed the fact that the slow-growth rout continues as rapidly as ever, a fact that only the slow-growthers seem to understand.

"The initiative wasn't an end in itself but a tool to bring about better growth management, and that is happening," said Bill Havert of the Sierra Club, undaunted by the defeat of the Riverside County measure, which he'd coauthored. Irvine Mayor Larry Agran, an ally of former '60s radical-turned-state assemblyman Tom Hayden, adds: "Even when you lose, you can come out winning on some important issues."

The left envisions the slow-growth movement as a means to regain the advantage in California politics—their answer to Proposition 13 and the tax revolt that propelled conservatives to power a decade ago. Havert stated in a February 1989 speech at a conference attended chiefly by developers that the

goal of the slow-growth movement is "to replace the market economy with the moral economy."

Agran, Havert, and other antigrowth activists are pleased in spite of the losses at the polls. They have dramatically slowed construction without enacting numerical limits to new development into law. The threat of a grassroots rebellion has scared the politicians, allowing the mere controversy over the initiatives to impose de facto limits on growth. Throughout California, even in areas that faced only the *threat* of an initiative, new obstacles to residential and commercial growth have risen. Governments have levied new building fees and added new hurdles and reviews to the planning process. Most importantly, frightened city councils and county supervisors have refused to approve new development at all.

In San Bernardino County, which faced no initiative, a Growth Management Task Force of politicians, builders, and slow-growth activists has proposed new building fees—as much as $10,000 per new house—on top of the fees already in place. And various cities in Orange County have moved to adopt the terms of the defeated slow-growth initiative.

IN OTHER WORDS, builders think they won in 1988, but in truth they won a small round of battles while losing the war. Slow-growth initiatives are chiefly a diversionary tactic, designed to capitalize on strong public sentiment against growth and traffic congestion to put pressure on local government.

California has grown from 20 million people in 1970 to 28 million today—a 40 percent jump in less than two decades. Population is projected to grow to 40 million by 2010, about the same rate of increase. Even at that size, however, California's major urban areas will still have a lower population density than most European cities, or even most of the urban areas on the eastern seaboard of the United States. To limit growth effectively, California would have to be prepared to expel current or future residents. Radical activists such as Havert, who has written extensively on the evils of any population growth, might very well like to see such steps.

But most Californians aren't opposed to growth per se. Rather, they are upset about a specific aspect of growth: traffic. On most major freeways, the number of cars during peak hours has doubled or more than doubled in the 1980s.

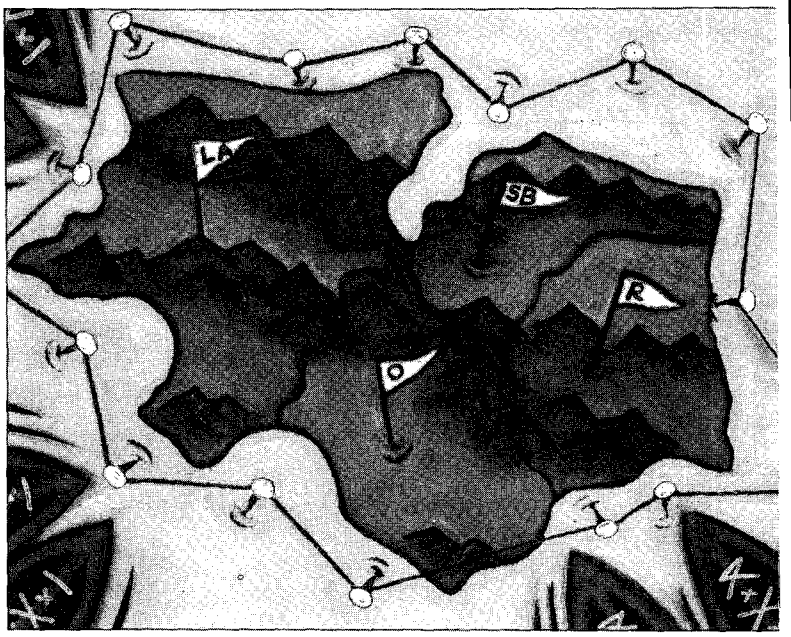
The chief cause of the calamitous congestion gripping the state, however, is not growth itself but bad government at the state level. Put simply, California stopped building roads 10 years ago, as a deliberate policy of Gov. Jerry Brown, whose vision it was to wean Californians from their automobiles.

It was among the most dramatic transformations of government policy in America. In the mid-1960s, California devoted 16 percent of the state budget to roadbuilding, constructing more than 100 miles of new freeways every year. Today, the state spends less than 6 percent of the budget for roads, and most of that money goes for maintenance. It shows no sign of getting back into the roadbuilding business, or of considering market alternatives, such as toll roads or peak-hour road pricing. Roadbuilding may cease entirely in 1990 because of a shortage of money.

It now takes as long to plan and build a freeway in California as it does to build a nuclear power plant, and for exactly the same reason—a shockingly long bureaucratic planning process. Like nuclear power plants, freeways are becoming prohibitively expensive to build in California—as much as $125 million a mile in some urban areas. Jerry Brown did his work well.

THE APPALLING TRAFFIC SITUATION and the resulting slow-growth ferment have caught the fancy of politicians. But what they propose as a remedy is more bad government. State Sen. Marian Bergeson (R-Newport Beach) has convened a Senate Select Committee on Planning for California's Growth, and this committee and other interested legislators have introduced at least 52 bills pertaining to growth management, regional planning, affordable housing, and transportation. Unlike most measures in California's fiercely partisan politics, the bills enjoy support from both Democrats and Republicans.

Although they differ in their particulars, the bills share one characteristic: they increase state-level involvement in what were formerly local decisions. Most would require local governments to conduct more reviews and submit to the state more reports on the implications of their land-use policies.



The bill that is perhaps most illustrative of what's really going on is Bergeson's SB 969, which would reorganize the Southern California Association of Governments, better known by its lovely acronym SCAG. SCAG has hitherto been an informal, voluntary association of government officials from cities and counties in the greater Los Angeles area. SCAG's chief purpose seems to be holding conferences and producing reports about obvious trends, including traffic congestion, air pollution, and the "jobs-housing imbalance." Its central insight is that traffic congestion would be greatly alleviated if more people lived closer to their jobs (really).

Bergeson's SB 969 would transform SCAG into an official

JILL BANASHEK

government body, with powers of appropriation and some discretionary authority to veto counties' planning decisions. The bill stops short of giving SCAG full veto power over *city* land-use decisions, but the general direction is clear. The object is to establish the principle of "regional government"—the mantra of the civic illuminati of California. Last fall, for instance, the Los Angeles 2000 Committee, composed of many of the most eminent business and academic leaders in the Los Angeles area, released a 100-page report whose recommendations included the establishment of at least three regional government organizations for Southern California.

None of the state-level proposals provides any money for new roads and other facilities. Instead, they proceed from the premise that "better planning" can make up for the failure of government to devote sufficient resources to basic needs. And the bottom line of "better planning" will be still more delays and new costs to get anything built.

What's really on the mind of slow-growthers is to create a state planning agency, with broad powers to regulate the local economy—something like the California Coastal Commission, which is known for its sweeping and unchecked power to control land use along the coast. SCAG, for starters, proposes to "reallocate" more than 250,000 new jobs and 125,000 new houses in Southern California. It would pressure local governments in "job rich" areas like Orange County to hinder commercial development and those in "housing rich" areas like San Bernardino County to limit housing construction. But SCAG's plans fail to consider that employers will move closer to their employees and new businesses will spring up near housing developments—as, indeed, is already occuring. By manipulating building patterns without regard for spontaneous adjustments arising from individual decisions, such central planning threatens to undermine those adjustments and may, in fact, actually make matters worse.

YOU WOULD THINK that the building industry would be in an uproar about all of this, but it is not. Here the genius of the slow-growth movement reveals itself. Ask builders about the increasing delays and difficulty in getting a building permit, and most will cite the "three rules of building." Rule number one: build. Rule number two: build at the lowest possible cost. Rule number three: if rule number one and rule number two come into conflict, rule number one takes precedence.

The lengthy and burdensome planning process, exacerbated by constant pressure from the slow-growth movement, implicitly offers builders an attractive, and corrupting, deal: You, the builder, agree to abide by the orders of the planning bureaucracy and fork over hefty building fees (which you pass along to the buyer anyway) for a myriad of purposes. In return, your profit will be guaranteed—increased, even—because of the market constriction this system creates.

Check the list of the 200 largest residential builders in California, published each March in the *Los Angeles Times*. Two things about this list stand out. First, of the 200 largest builders of single-family homes, apartments, and condominiums, 121 had *zero* unsold units in inventory at the end of 1988; another 32 had fewer than 10 unsold units. Not surprisingly, nearly all of the 200 enjoyed a significant increase in revenue in 1988, and most expect another big jump in 1989.

Second, you see almost no new companies over the last few years. You would expect both of these circumstances in a market regulated effectively to discourage new competition. Only the large and well-established builders can withstand the rigors of the planning process, but those who can, reap enormous profits.

"The smaller developer is simply not going to have the financial staying power to deal with committee meetings and environmental reviews and so on," says Richard Weinstein, dean of UCLA's Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning and a member of the L.A. 2000 Committee. "In the past, lots of people have been able to make money in real estate. I think fewer and fewer will make more and more in the future." As a result, says this ardent proponent of regional planning, "the housing problem is only going to get worse—much worse—before it gets better."

A few builders will admit that they don't publicly criticize the planning process because they are afraid the planners will delay or derail their building permits. This is bad enough, but the Faustian bargain described above is even more insidious, because it has fully compromised a crucial sector of the economy. It is common now to hear builders publicly express sympathy for "managed growth," and they routinely make large campaign contributions to slow-growth politicians.

Builders today behave increasingly like any other special-interest group whose advantage is dependent on government favor and who then must "play the game" in exchange for assured profits. Further evidence of this trend is the vast expansion of planning firms that advise builders on how to obtain the necessary political permission to build—and act as lobbyists and negotiators on their behalf. There is even a new breed of "developer," who never builds a single building but whose profit comes from buying land, securing political permission to build, then selling lots to builders. The profit margin for such developers runs about twice that of the builders.

A candid survey of the debate over growth and planning in California recalls Tocqueville's description of democratic despotism: "It covers the surface of society with a network of small complicated rules, minute and uniform, through which the most original minds and the most energetic characters cannot penetrate....The will of man is not shattered, but softened, bent, and guided; men are seldom forced to act, but they are constantly restrained from acting. Such a power does not destroy, but it prevents existence; it does not tyrannize, but it compresses, enervates, extinguishes, and stupefies the people, till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd."

Next time you hear advocates of "managed growth" talk about "quality of life," you'll know what they mean. ◼

Frequent REASON *contributor Steven Hayward is director of the Claremont Institute's Golden State Project.*

ANOTHER POINT OF LIGHT

PRETTY SHADY BUNCH

BY CHARLES OLIVER

IN 1970, 15-YEAR-OLD Andy Lipkis attended summer camp in Southern California's San Bernardino Mountains. "Yours may be the last generation to enjoy this forest," a visiting naturalist told him. "Within 30 years, smog will have killed most of these trees."

Andy looked down into the valley at the gray smog and thought of it choking the life out of the forest. "Is there anything we can do about it?" he asked.

"Well, we could replace the dying trees with ones that will grow in spite of the smog," said the naturalist. "But you can't replant an entire forest."

Disturbed by the naturalist's prediction, Andy and his friends decided to plant some smog-tolerant trees around their campgrounds. For most of the campers, that was the end of their involvement with reforestation. But for Andy Lipkis, it was just the beginning. He read everything he could about forestry and the environment. And for three years he tried and failed to convince politicians and business people to do something to solve the environmental problems plaguing Southern California.

Finally, in 1973, he heard that the state forestry service was going to plow under 20,000 pine seedlings. Lipkis convinced the directors of 20 summer camps to join with him in planting the seedlings to replace the trees killed by pollution. Then he called the state forestry service to explain his proposal and ask for the seedlings.

"Fine," said the voice on the other end. "Send us $600 by the end of next week, and you can have them."

Lipkis complained that he couldn't raise the money that quickly, but the voice on the other end explained that the seedbeds had to be cleared for a new crop.

After several futile fund-raising calls, Lipkis contacted the *Los Angeles Times*. Later that day, a *Times* reporter called to say that the forestry division had agreed to stop plowing the seedlings under.

When the state delivered the surviving 8,000 trees to Lipkis, he and his volunteers planted them throughout Southern California. In the next 16 years, TreePeople, as the group came to be known, grew and matured like the seedlings it planted. Today, it has a 19 employees and a $860,000 annual budget, raised entirely from private sources. In addition, the group receives $1.5 million each year in nonmonetary contributions, such as gardening tools and seeds.

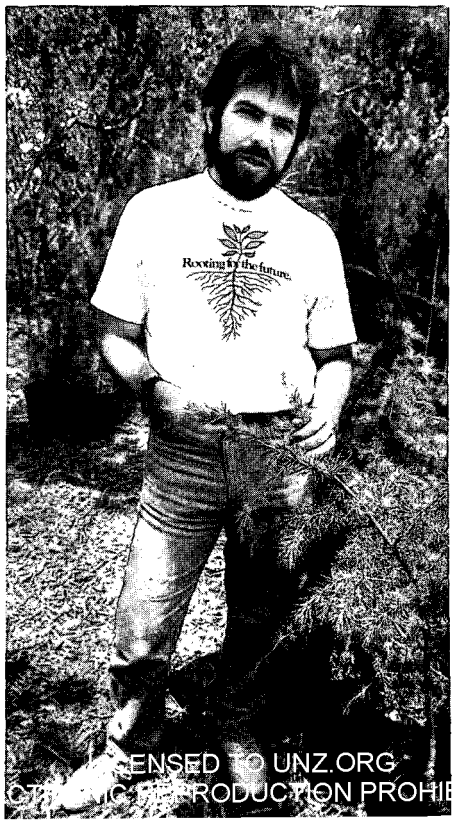
TreePeople manages a 45-acre park in Coldwater Canyon above Beverly Hills, takes 50,000 children each year through a program that teaches them about dangers to the environment, plants 10,000 seedlings annually in the mountains around Los Angeles and another 1,000 in the city, and since 1984 has rescued more than 80,000 surplus fruit trees and delivered them to low-income families. In 1986, 5,000 fruit trees were flown to development projects in Ethiopia and Kenya.

TreePeople may be best known for its successful efforts to plant a million trees in Los Angeles for the 1984 Olympics. In 1980, says Lipkis, "The city planning department called and said, 'We've just computed that we need a million new trees to help clean up the air. Could you help us? It looks like it'll cost us $20 million and take 20 years.' "

But Lipkis knew better. "We told them that with volunteers we could do it in time for the Olympics, at 1 percent of the cost, none of which would be taxpayers' money," he recalls. TreePeople planted the final tree just four days before the opening ceremonies began. Planted largely on private land, most of the trees survived. Experts predict that when they reach 20 years of age they will filter 200 tons of pollutants daily from the air.

As word of TreePeople's success spread, other groups began calling for advice about reforestation. TreePeople has been the catalyst for tree-planting efforts across the United States and in foreign countries such as Australia, Ireland, and Great Britain.

The group doesn't rest on its laurels, however. TreePeople has now joined with the American Forestry Association to plant 100 million trees across the United States. Closer to home, they are planting an additional 5 million trees in Los Angeles. Lipkis plans to plant as many as possible on private land, because he has discovered that private owners are more likely to give the trees the care they need. "You can't plant them on public land and expect them to survive," he explains.



JONATHON NOUROK

Twenty years of activism have reaffirmed Lipkis's belief that individuals can make a difference. "Traditionally, most environmental organizations' tack has been politics. The way to solve the problem is legislate," Lipkis explains. "That hasn't really empowered people." But people "don't have to wait for legislation," he urges. "They don't have to wait for major changes to happen. They can bring about major changes just by taking small steps." ◻

Charles Oliver is editorial assistant and staff writer at REASON.

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HAUNTED HOUSING

BY WILLIAM L. BAER

THERE IS AN IRONY TO URBAN AFFAIRS often lost on reformers. Apparent solutions of one era become the obstacles to solutions in the next. The biggest obstacle of all is the failure to recognize that hindrance. Reformers' trusted ally of regulation becomes their secret enemy: a "stealth" instrument of obstruction they cannot identify.

Housing is a case in point—housing in the Los Angeles region, poignantly so. Southern California's burgeoning population and accompanying extremes in housing poverty and housing wealth have spurred some ludicrous uses of regulation, making illegal not only *sub*standard but *supra*standard housing.

The region has a desperate housing affordability problem among its poor. It has the largest homeless population in the United States (at least 35,000). The near-homeless (more than 200,000 people), while not out on the street, can only afford to rent garages, chicken coops, and other substandard structures for shelter. Those who are able to rent often pay an exorbitant 40 to 50 percent of their incomes to do so.

Not everyone is caught up in the housing shortage. Even more people than the homeless live in housing worth at least $1 million. Perfectly good houses that would sell for $500,000 or more are torn down to make way for housing worth millions. Some areas experiencing these "teardowns" have adopted sumptuary zoning laws limiting house size. The new units replacing the old are thought to be too big, too grand, too out-of-scale for the rest of the neighborhood.

The reasons for the current housing crisis in Southern California are complex and not yet well understood. But one is that the region has fallen captive to the very devices fashioned to liberate cities from their housing crises of times past.

THE GHOSTS OF REGULATIONS PAST LURK IN THE SHORTAGES OF THE PRESENT.

UNTIL THE MIDDLE OF THE 19TH CENTURY, housing in the Western world was a private matter. Minimal regulations, such as prohibitions on thatched roofs, were designed largely to prevent fires. When rural workers streamed into the cities following the Industrial Revolution, the construction industry was barely formed. It could hardly keep pace with the demand for housing by the middle and upper classes, nor readily produce units that unskilled workers could afford. New units provided for low-skilled workers became instant slums, even by the low standards of the day.

The result was, quite naturally, massive overcrowding and truly wretched living conditions among the urban poor. Europe and the United States alike experienced urban epidemics of cholera, typhus, and yellow fever. (During much of the century, these were erroneously believed to emanate from vapors rising from dampness or putrid matter—the *miasma* theory of disease). Not only could these diseases spread to the well-to-do through normal urban interaction, civic elites worried that a moral decline of the lower classes brought about by their low "quality of life" as well as their version of "substance abuse"—drunkenness—would begin to pervade much of "respectable society." They also fretted about a loss of worker productivity in the factories, a stirring of political discontent and clamor for socialist reforms in the slums, and, on the Continent, the physical incapacity of men to serve in the army.

A housing and health "crisis" was at hand. Out of this crisis grew reforms. Chief among these was the state's right to enter private premises to conduct building inspections, to mandate corrections in living conditions, and to regulate new construction—all in the name of the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

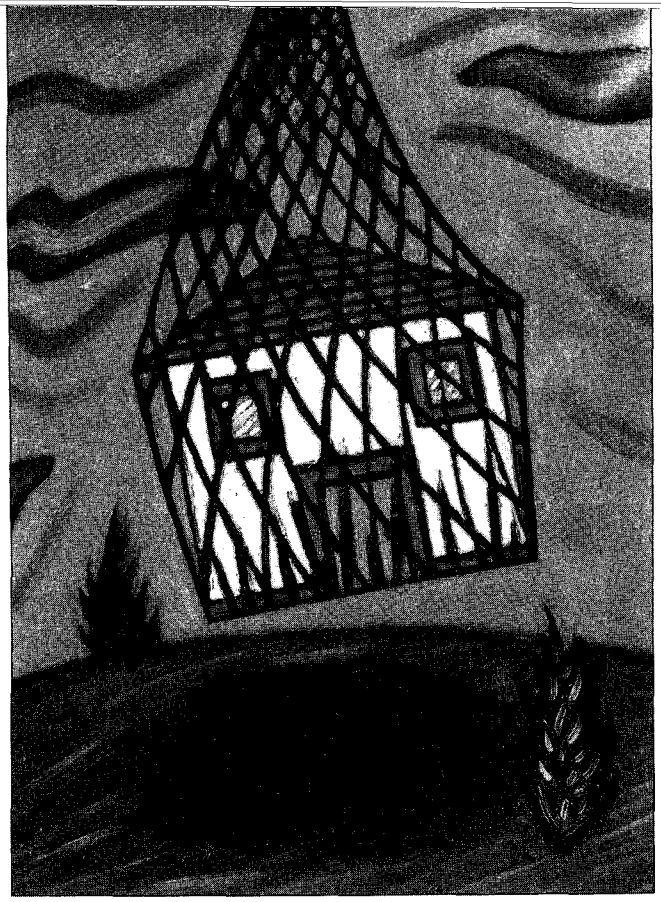
It was a sea-change in the boundary line between private property rights and the powers of the state. Subsequently, subdivision regulations, building codes, and zoning ordinances expanded the powers of governments to scrutinize and supervise housing development. (Surprisingly, given its "unplanned" reputation, Los Angeles, in 1909, became the first city in the United States to adopt districting—the forerunner of zoning.)

These government interventions in housing did not cure the housing problem, however. Housing improvement over the last 100 years is more likely the result of: (1) basic changes in plumbing and waste disposal and in public inoculations and medical treatment and (2) rising economic prosperity that has allowed the poor to rent or purchase higher-quality housing. The regulations undoubtedly did *some* good—but less than has been claimed for them.

LOS ANGELES, THE WESTERN WORLD'S preeminent urban recipient of immigrants, today faces an influx the likes of which has not been seen in the United States since the wave of immigrants that hit Ellis Island and the East Coast at the turn of the century. Like the major cities of 100 years ago, the Los Angeles region has been unable to keep up with demand for housing. But there are differences, too.

Unlike cities of a century ago, we have a well-developed construction industry. It can produce housing in large quantities—if allowed to do so. That was demonstrated in the 1950s and '60s when the growth rate was just as great, the building regulations less stringent, and the housing crisis, comparatively speaking, nonexistent. To be sure, even those eras could not have quickly housed today's poorest immigrant. But they would have reduced the problem more quickly than we are managing at present.

Nor do middle-class and elite homeowners in Los Angeles today experience the same anxiety about the ill-housed as was



JILL BANASHEK

felt 100 years ago. Today's concern is not miasma but smog, not pestilence but traffic congestion, not a threat to the body politic but erosion of property values. Indeed, the primary danger, in the view of middle-class property owners, is not old slums but new construction, particularly in their neighborhoods—new units most apt to be inhabited by people like themselves.

Communities have enacted a host of building and zoning regulations, as well as outright growth controls, to inhibit the very housing construction that would over time help to lower housing costs by expanding supply. The very kind of regulations formulated in another century to *solve* a housing crisis is used today in a way that *exacerbates* one.

THE PROBLEM TODAY, therefore, is not only the problem of housing but the problem of encrusted past reforms threatening the success of future ones. The variety of housing markets and the diversity of government approaches to housing problems provide some hope—but barely. Homeowners and landlords have the power to solve a major portion of the problem, but they are not allowed to do so. The region, despite the vitality inherent in a diverse, sprawling, seemingly unstructured regional economy, is still encumbered by mistakes of the past. These mistakes can be summarized as a misplaced admiration for the big, the uniform, and the centralized.

Following the Depression, and then World War II, many cities in Southern California dutifully adopted large-scale government approaches to housing. Redevelopment and construction of public housing were intended to tear down slums faster than code enforcement could and to make government responsible for supplying the replacement housing—often, but not always, aimed at the poor.

The whole approach was in part premised on economies of scale. Presumably, large housing organizations should be able to produce affordable housing less expensively than private, but smaller, builders. They could spread their fixed costs over many more units; strike better deals with suppliers, labor, and lenders; deal more effectively with city hall; and in general develop the expertise to provide housing for the poor.

Yet the two largest housing-oriented agencies in Los Angeles are in trouble. Their very size has made them unwieldy and their successes and failures difficult to monitor. For instance, the public Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, with a $135-million annual budget (and beholden to the whims of Congress for its funds) is in perpetual turmoil as it attempts to manage its far-flung holdings of 35,000 units with diverse occupants of different ethnicities. Tenants persistently complain that their special needs are ignored. Even the authority's attempt to sell off about 700 units in the Jordan Downs project—government-owned but nevertheless dilapidated—to privatize the project's management seems to be foundering from Housing Authority management problems.

The other major actor in affordable housing is the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA)—at the moment, the only major developer of low-cost housing in town. Its large size and intricate tax-increment financing make its workings difficult to penetrate. Mayor Tom Bradley has proposed that the CRA use another $2 billion from tax increments to provide affordable housing over the next 20 years. But a county watchdog group, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, found that the CRA has "repeatedly produced misleading and inaccurate data when reporting its affordable housing record to city and state officials." Once again, "bigness" cannot necessarily be equated with "goodness," no matter how noble the original intent.

By contrast, the region's 75-plus nonprofit housing developers have sparked a wave of interest. These smaller, decentralized providers of affordable housing are inherently diverse, tapping different sources of funds and expertise and tending to develop smaller and more-manageable projects, averaging 25 to 100 units a year. In total they build about 2,000 units annually in the region, with the prospect that this will grow to about 10,000 within five years. Because of their very diversity, they are better attuned than a large agency to the various niches of clientele. Each does not have to be all things to all the needy. They tailor their housing to special groups of needy and are able to provide close supervision of their projects.

Homeowners and landlords have the power to solve a major portion of the housing problem. But they are not allowed to do so.

Andy Raubeson, executive director of the Single Room Occupancy Housing Corp., even worries that his group's growing

success in developing projects will render him unable to personally inspect all 1,000-plus units four times a year. This kind of close involvement is essential to successfully housing low-income tenants. No staff memos can provide such direct communication of tenants' problems to top executives so that tenants can be confident that their concerns are getting through. Gaining tenant confidence is a primary way of keeping maintenance costs down; satisfied tenants take good care of their units. Large-scale, centralized housing empires cannot assure this close attention.

Which is more harmful to health, safety, and welfare—to be inadequately sheltered or to have no shelter at all?

California's state government has also contributed to a decentralized approach to regional housing problems. In its strong observance of "home rule" and local control, it has devised a system of coordinating local efforts without a central fiat. (A key purpose was to encourage local governments to relax their building regulations so as to lower housing costs.) In 1980 the state mandated that local governments devise a housing element as part of their general plans. The process assumes that local estimates of housing needs must sum to a regional total, and the regional totals must sum to the state's. Yet there is provision for local governments' estimates to supersede regional estimates of local need. Although cities' responses to this requirement run the gamut from whole-hearted support to ill-disguised resistance, the political process is accommodating these disparities as it moves toward decentralized, regional coordination of housing.

THESE "OFFICIAL" OR "RECOGNIZED" WAYS to alleviate L.A.'s housing crunch are not sufficient. Community leaders should be paying more attention to a largely overlooked means—the "shadow market." It annually produces about *twice as many* lower-cost rentals as new construction, even after counting subsidized units. The shadow market is the work—unplanned by housing officials—of literally thousands of homeowners and landlords subdividing large, existing units into several smaller ones; converting old offices, stores, and even unused schools into housing; and carving apartments out of existing houses. All of these are sources of affordable housing. The costs of this "non-new construction" is lower than new construction because the land is already paid or being paid for and the neighborhood infrastructure (public improvements and facilities) is already in place. Combined, these factors can knock 25 to 35 percent off the price.

Some equate the shadow market with illegal or substandard housing "bootlegged" without a building permit. But unless local regulations prohibit such creative use of space, shadow-market housing need not be illegal or substandard, and it has an important role to play in meeting the housing needs of the elderly, students, and single-parent households.

"Granny flats" and accessory apartments offer another backyard source of low-cost, unsubsidized housing that small homeowners and landlords can produce. Yet here too regulations unduly fetter their initiative. Middle- and upper-income people, afraid of what such units might do to property values, demand regulations. Although the state has mandated that each city allow for such units, most local governments have responded with deliberately onerous restrictions to discourage their production. One popular means to is to prohibit tandem (single-file) parking. To meet requirements for additional off-street parking, building owners have to build side-by-side slots, which take significantly more space and expense.

This is just one instance of the larger problem presented by building codes. Nominally established to protect the health, safety, and welfare of occupants, they too often do the reverse. For instance, in the city of Los Angeles there are about 50,000 unreinforced brick structures that do not meet current earthquake safety requirements. The city has set a deadline for these units to be brought up to code or torn down. Yet these old units are an important source of low-income housing. Renovation requires rent increases; tearing them down removes them from the stock. Either way the poor are harmed in the very name of protecting them. The city council recognizes the dilemma and is searching for ways to provide rehabilitation assistance to keep the stock and hold rents down, but it is highly unlikely that enough funds will be forthcoming.

Similarly, the city council has decided to punish garage dwellers' landlords. Owners of illegally converted garages will be required to pay $5,000 relocation expenses to their occupants when the units are discovered and closed down. But the garage owners are the only ones providing shelter for these people. If they don't undertake this "greedy" (yet humanitarian) act, who will? Not the city council, which is hard-pressed to find housing; not the public, which recently failed to pass a bond issue to finance low-income housing.

Which is more harmful to health, safety, and welfare? To be inadequately sheltered or to have no shelter at all? It would seem more reasonable to harness this private and individual initiative, guiding it in constructive ways, than merely to prohibit it. A compromise might be to grant a limited-use permit for, say, 10 years, or until the crisis abates (as it surely will) and with minimum health facilities installed (a portable toilet in the backyard if the garage has no plumbing).

L.A.'s freewheeling, anything-goes days are gone. Instead, the powers that be have passed a host of regulations to "protect" the people. Some hurt, instead. We should be devising ways to encourage private innovative responses to the housing problem rather than uniformly squelching them. We have a half-century of demonstration in Los Angeles that "official," publicly subsidized approaches cannot by themselves do the job. ■

William C. Baer is an associate professor of urban and regional planning at the University of Southern California.

ANOTHER POINT OF LIGHT

THE WIZARD OF WATTS

BY CRAIG M. COLLINS

WHILE MOVIES such as *Stand and Deliver* and *Lean on Me* glorify the near miracles that some teachers have been able to perform in inner-city schools, Dolores Sheen of the Sheenway School in Watts accomplishes something every single month that no public school teacher has ever done. She pays the school's electric bill. And the telephone bill, salaries for the school's 13 employees, and all other expenses of a private school for kids from preschool through 12th grade.

It isn't easy. She has about 60 students who are supposed to pay tuition of somewhere between $225 and $300 per month. Although the school operates year-round, this wouldn't cover the $5,000 it costs to meet state regulatory standards, even if all the students paid it. They don't. Aunt Dolores, as the kids call her, is a full-bodied black woman with blondish hair and an indefatigable smile. She speaks as crisply as a typewriter and resignedly says, "We give a lot of scholarships."

Her father, a family physician, founded the school in 1971 to give children the heart, brains, and courage to escape their riot-torn ghetto. His financial legacy, and a handful of private donors including celebrities such as Lionel Ritchie and Harold Ramis, keep the school in business. Barely. Still, the school takes no state or federal funds. "If you get these grants," says Sheen, "you're indebted to the people who give them."

Local business people contribute whatever they can—one gave two arcade video games, another loaned a full-grown hog for stud purposes when the school had a pig named Petunia. Sadly, Petunia died of fright on her wedding night because, says Sheen, "She never saw a man before." (At her wake, Petunia was roasted luau-style and served to the students—"even the Muslims"—who loved it.)

Sheen's independence gives her the freedom to create an environment unlike anything you would find in a typical public school. The pig is survived by a menagerie of small animals, including pigeons, chickens, rabbits, gerbils, geese, and a snake that has slipped out of its aquarium and is living somewhere in one of the school buildings, sixth-grader Tanisha explains, "in hibernation." The premises are guarded by Barney, a dog of uncertain parentage who stands as high as a pony—an easy comparison to make, since the school does own a pony named Apache.

Sheen hopes that taking care of the animals will teach these city kids responsibility. She wants to expose them to all kinds of new stimuli, to expand the horizons of their very limited urban lives. The students grow vegetables in a small garden across the street. One second-grader who was asked to help pull weeds quite innocently responded, "Pull weeds? You supposed to *smoke* weed."

Craig M. Collins

She tries to teach kids what they need to know to survive in the ghetto—karate class is mandatory—and also what they need to know so they won't have to. In addition to learning the three Rs and computer skills, Sheenway kids learn about culture. They all take dance class and a Shakespeare course taught by actress Jenny Agutter.

"From Purim to Chinese New Year," Sheen explains, "we celebrate all cultures. We have seder at Passover. We've had a priest come in and say Mass." All students learn a foreign language, beginning in grammar school. Now it's French. It can be Japanese or something else depending on which teachers the school can get. Sheenway also offers English as a Second Language for Hispanic adults.

For the children, however, some of whom have spent their entire lives speaking only ghetto vernacular, proper English is a second language. Meisha, a soft-spoken 13-year-old, politely introduces herself to guests and explains, "I was the one you seen earlier." Sheen, about five feet away and on the telephone, stops her conversation to correct her. "*Saw* earlier. I was the one you *saw* earlier." But later, in a characteristic moment of boasting about her kids, Sheen slips: "These kids wouldn't steal for nothing in the world. *Anything*. Excuse me. I have to talk both ways."

Her energy seems limitless when she talks about her students. She still wears a neck brace, however, from a spinal injury suffered in a car accident in January. Her right arm is partially paralyzed. She has begun to think about what would happen to the school if she entered the hospital. She wonders who would do the cooking, cleaning, teaching, and other jobs that she now does and that she could not afford to hire someone else to do.

A number of parents, such as Mary Gray, are scared about having to send their kids elsewhere. Gray jerked her daughter Monique out of a nearby Catholic school after some students there beat her face bloody. Parents have begun to organize candy sales and fish frys to raise badly needed money.

The school's fate is uncertain, but Sheen's optimism is not. She believes that she is accomplishing her goal. She's reaching the kids. She's making them feel like students, not education-system conscripts. Shortly after the school was founded, she recounts, the fire bell rang. Everyone poured out into the street. The kids gathered around her. "Everything was a'clanging and a'ringing," she remembers. "And they said—these big tough gang kids—they said, 'Our dog okay? Our horse okay?' Using the word *our*. Ownership. And I said. 'We're in.' " ■

Craig M. Collins is assistant editor of REASON.

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YOU CAN'T GET THERE FROM HERE

BY PETER GORDON AND HARRY RICHARDSON

WHEN IT COMES TO MOTOR TRAFFIC in cities, is urban sprawl part of the problem or part of the solution? The conventional wisdom has been outspoken on this issue. The more spread out the city, it maintains, the greater the traffic congestion. Los Angeles is, to many, the proof of this phenomenon.

"Businesses locate in our crowded downtowns while most affordable housing for workers is in outlying areas," Don Griffin and Mark Pisano, president and executive director of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG), write in a typical analysis of L.A.'s traffic problems. "Hundreds of thousands of employees climb into their cars and flood the freeways morning and evening, many driving clear across the region."

In reality, however, sprawl can be efficient, because it locates workers closer to their workplaces. Indeed, most commuting is now suburb-to-suburb. Industry appears to follow the labor force into the suburbs, with the result that most work trips are faster and shorter than is widely supposed. Although congestion is still a problem, dispersion—sprawl—does alleviate it. Advances in telecommunications suggest that industry will become ever more footloose. And, indicates the available evidence, dispersed living patterns may in fact *decrease* travel time and congestion.

19TH-CENTURY TRANSIT PLANS WON'T SOLVE 21ST-CENTURY TRAFFIC PROBLEMS.

By analyzing Census and U.S. Department of Transportation data, we have discovered a number of trends that run counter to the conventional wisdom:

- Most Americans do not work downtown. Most travel to work is suburb-to-suburb, over relatively short distances and on relatively uncongested routes.
- Downtown crowding and traffic do not grow without limit, because decentralization is a safety valve that offers relief.
- Markets for mass transit are extremely limited.
- Land, labor, housing, and transportation markets interact in ways that are favorable to the urban economy's success. This process, which includes adjustments to shorten commutes, can be undermined by such government interventions as urban renewal, overinvestment in downtown infrastructure, or construction of downtown convention centers.
- The government actions usually proposed to deal with traffic congestion are inappropriate and more likely to contribute to traffic problems than to solve them.

Turning to Los Angeles, we find that the downtown area accommodates only 3 percent of all jobs, compared to 11 percent in San Francisco, a more "traditional" city. For the greater Los Angeles area, using 1980 census data, we have identified 19 major activity centers—including a downtown more than twice the size of the one identified by census authorities. All 19 centers combined account for a mere 17.5 percent of the area's jobs, with other employment spread too thinly to form traditional centers. Such dispersal reduces commuting times: the shortest work trips are suburb-to-suburb, or "lateral," rather than from suburb into downtown, or "radial." Nationwide, people who live and work in the suburbs constitute 45 percent of the work force—both the largest and the fastest-growing group of commuters—and face an average commute of only 20 minutes.

Trip time data are difficult to obtain for the region, at least after 1980. By default, anecdotes about the three- and four-hour round-trip commuter prevail. Yet a 1988 survey reported in the *Los Angeles Times* found that half the daily work trips in Los Angeles County were under 10 miles, 71 percent under 20 miles—little different from the results obtained in a Caltrans study 20 years ago.

These findings suggest that the suburbanization of jobs and residences has a *raison d'être* in the travel savings that result. Not only are businesses and housing decentralizing, but they are moving closer to each other. Locally, for example, the Orange County area has in recent years added more jobs than workers. This trend is decried by many planners, who fear it will increase the "jobs-housing imbalance." To the contrary, it represents an adjustment to the earlier growth in housing.

IRONICALLY, AS LOS ANGELES'S DISPERSED development is becoming an international model, its form is vilified by civic leaders who misread trends and advocate a variety of misguided interventions. Weak-headedness is too often combined with ham-fistedness. SCAG recently released the foreboding forecast that the area's rush-hour freeway speeds (currently averaging about 35 mph) will soon slow to 17 mph. This prediction has become the centerpiece of the prevailing doomsday scenario. But it is grounded in a *projection* of jobs-housing imbalance, with most of the new jobs assumed to be centrally located while most new residential development occurs in the region's periphery—exactly contrary to recent patterns. As antidotes to the doomsday scenario, local planners propose:

- A Regional Mobility Plan, including a $43.7 billion program to build and improve public transit. The plan includes projections that transit's share of local trips will rise from the current 5 percent to 19 percent—a ludicrously high prediction that runs counter to all recent experience in all American cities. In addition to building a subway line at an estimated cost of $250 million *per mile*, the plan calls for construction of a

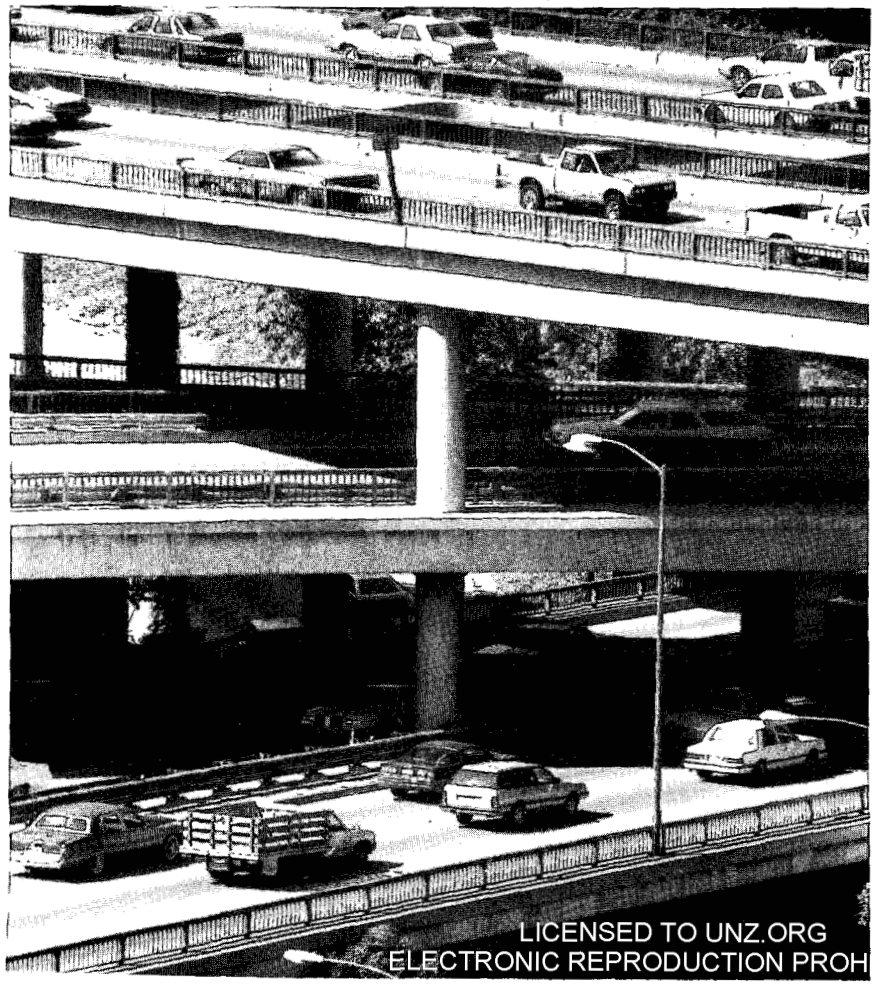
light-rail, or trolley, line between Los Angeles and Long Beach. Travel on the 22-mile trolley line, which will cost between $600 million and $1 billion, will actually take longer than an express bus already in operation. (And the bus carries only about 1,000 passengers a day, compared to wildly optimistic projections of 54,700 trolley riders.)

- A Growth Management Plan built around the proposal that SCAG become the official regional jobs-housing "balancer," usurping local governments' treasured land-use–planning role and ignoring the automatic balancing that takes place as individuals and businesses relocate to reduce commuting times.
- An Air Quality Management Plan that includes draconian mitigation schemes, some relying on nonexistent technologies. For example, the plan calls for 40 percent of all cars and light trucks and 70 percent of heavy trucks and all buses to run on alternative fuels by 1998. It would ban drive-through establishments, deodorants, gasoline-powered lawnmowers, and barbecue lighter fluid. And it would require employers to put some of their work force on nine-day, 80-hour shifts and some on four-day, 40-hour shifts; some other employees would have to work at home. The whole program is rationalized by assertions that total costs exceed total benefits. Research at the University of Southern California suggests, however, that two-thirds of the target reductions of pollutants could be achieved in other ways for one-quarter of the plan's costs.

We can only speculate on the various motivations that prompt these plans. But the thinking behind the alarming forecasts—the models and the theories on which the plans are based and much of the associated discussion about cities—is simply wrong. The jobs-housing imbalance story does not square with the facts; it merely provides justification for spending large sums of public money and expanding bureaucratic authority.

The new subways in American cities are failures. The Washington Metro costs $8.00 per passenger. Miami's subway carries 30,000 people a day; planners predicted 200,000.

Such plans not only misread urban development trends, they also ignore the widely documented performance of rail transit in U.S. cities. The new subways placed in American cities in recent years are across-the-board failures. Peter Hall's well-known book, *Great Planning Disasters*, rightly cites San Francisco's BART, whose ridership stands at less than 80 percent of that forecast for 1975—a number that was predicted to rise over time. Fares cover only about half of BART's operating costs; the cost per passenger trip exceeds those for taking the bus or driving. Washington, D.C.'s Metro racks up costs of $8.00 per passenger, according to leading urban economists Edwin Mills and Bruce Hamilton. Miami's new subway carries about 30,000 passengers per day, not the 200,000 forecast by its planners.



JONATHON NOUROK

Their sorry performances are not surprising. There simply are not markets for new rail transit systems in decentralized modern American cities. Development is too dispersed; the auto is too convenient and flexible and its use is underpriced. Fixed-rail systems cannot be rerouted as people move. Taking the subway increases commuting time for riders who don't live and work close to subway stations, and many people must still drive to the station. As both jobs and housing continue to relocate to the suburbs, the markets for downtown-feeding transit diminish. Yet planners continue to rely on models that assume continued downtown growth, worsening congestion, and metropolitan catastrophe.

In part, these models stem from nostalgia for old-fashioned downtowns, preautomobile modes of transportation, and a host of imagined premodern virtues. "Livable city" romantics have little use for Los Angeles's freeway-connected form. And the romanti-

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WHO FRAMED GENERAL MOTORS?

ANYONE WHO SAW THE MOVIE *The Man in the White Suit* knows that British clothing manufacturers conspired to destroy a fabric that would never wear out or need cleaning. In *The Formula,* the oil companies put the kibosh on a chemical that would replace petroleum, probably stashing it wherever they're hiding that 150-mpg carburetor. But what about this "criminal conspiracy," as Harry Reasoner described it on "60 Minutes," in which General Motors shut down L.A.'s streetcar company so it could sell more autos?

In 1944, GM and other auto-related companies—Standard Oil of California, Firestone Tire & Rubber, Phillips Petroleum, and Mack Truck—did in fact purchase minority interests in the Los Angeles Railway company (LARY). Immediately, LARY began replacing L.A.'s "Red Cars" with motor bus service.

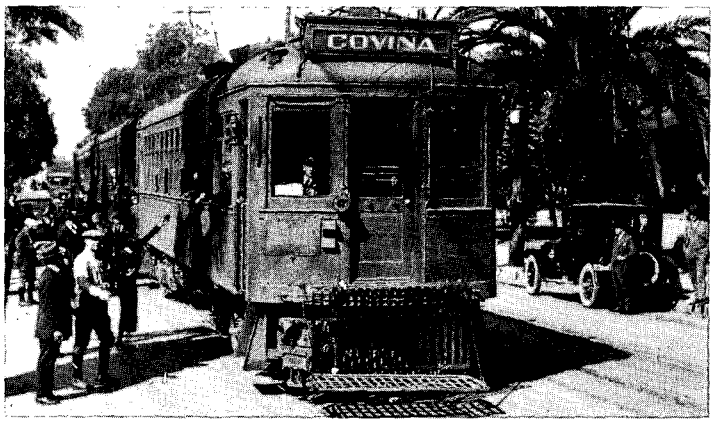
Thirty years went by, and in 1974, a Senate legislative analyst named Bradford Snell produced a widely relied-upon report suggesting that GM and its buddies had manipulated "ground transportation to serve corporate wants instead of social needs." Snell concluded that "the noisy, foul smelling buses turned earlier patrons of the high-speed rail system away from public transit and, in effect, sold millions of private automobiles."

But two years ago, historian Scott L. Bottles published *Los Angeles and the Automobile*, an in-depth analysis examining the complete historical record of transit in Los Angeles. His conclusion: Snell's report was "riddled with factual errors and poorly drawn conclusions."

By 1944, suggests Bottles, LARY was a lumbering, money-losing dinosaur. Ridership and service quality were declining, as streetcars simply could not meet the needs of a developing city.

"General Motors did not kill them," Bottles concludes. "Mismanagement, government actions restricting corporate investment in railways, the inflation following World War I, persistent financial problems, and the rise of the automobile all worked together to make streetcars obsolete."

Before the advent of buses and cars, the streetcars operated under monopoly-like conditions and earned the enmity of the public. With numerous examples from newspaper editorials and city council minutes, Bottles portrays the nasty and brutish life of a Red Car rider. Seats were scarce. During rush hour, riders were jammed together in the slow-moving cars. Some had to cling to the outside. Inside, reported the Los Angeles *Record*, "the air was a pestilence; it was heavy with disease and the emanations from many bodies."



LOS ANGELES COUNTY LIBRARY

Angelenos, writes Bottles, "constantly complained about the quality of rail transit. From their point of view, the railways sought to benefit at the public's expense. In seeking to operate their business profitably, railway officials, in the minds of many citizens, deliberately ran too few cars, refused to build necessary crosstown lines or tracks into lightly populated areas, ignored the safety of the public, and bribed elected officials for favors." When jitney operators began to lure passengers traveling short distances, for instance, LARY complained to the city council. It moved quickly to protect the rail system—and its transit-tax revenue—by regulating the jitneys out of business.

Facing a monopoly that was at best unmolested by the government and at worst supported by it, the public found a technological solution: the private automobile. From 1918 to 1923, the number of cars registered in Los Angeles increased fourfold.

So the legend that explains the introduction of the automobile as the result of a political/business conspiracy is exactly wrong. Long before the auto interests bought into the railway company, the automobile was smashing—not inspiring—such a conspiracy.

Mass-transit ridership fell constantly. The average person in Los Angeles rode the Red Cars about 200 times in 1915; by 1940, mass-transit ridership was down to around 50 times a year, including bus trips. When GM and the other auto interests bought into LARY, the new management turned to buses because they were much more flexible and mobile—able to change routes without laying new track. As a result, buses briefly attracted more riders, getting the average up to around 125 rides per person in 1945.

This is not to imply that the auto interests behaved like Boy Scouts. A few years after the oil, tire, and truck companies became shareholders of LARY's parent company, LARY was convicted of antitrust violations for buying supplies from these shareholders without competitive bidding.

Nevertheless, concludes Bottles, "General Motors did not attempt to destroy mass transportation. Rather, it wanted to save it in order to maintain a market for its buses. The fact that the conglomerate used unsavory and monopolistic business techniques is quite beside the point."

—Craig M. Collins

cized view of cities has a powerful hold on political leaders, media pundits, and too many planners. But the overwhelming and universal success of automobiles as the travel mode of choice means that preautomobile forms cannot be recreated.

IF URBAN SPRAWL hasn't caused Los Angeles's traffic congestion, congestion nevertheless exists. And our argument does not mean that cities can afford to sit back and wait for the traffic "crisis" to resolve itself via decentralization. But innovative, efficient solutions have been crowded out by all the attention (and money) devoted to rail transit projects. And planners have been reluctant to work with, rather than against, individual choice.

Economists know that highway management cries for highways to levy time-of-day "congestion charges," so that drivers will have a financial incentive to travel less during rush hours. Yet this idea has been ignored by planners. Instead, congestion itself is the only thing that deters people from driving at any particular time—what *The Economist* calls "rationing-by-purgatory." This form of rationing leaves the roads to people who value their time least rather than those who value their travel most.

Imagine the problems, and resource misallocations, that would follow fixed rates on long-distance calls at all times of the day. We face waste of this kind on our major roads every day. Experience confirms the fact that we cannot build our way out of the problem, because new highways attract back all those who had been rationed off the network by congestion. In the absence of prices, supply and demand are balanced by congestion. Congestion delays mean economic inefficiency, not merely hot tempers.

Commuters are crowded out by drivers who have little incentive to postpone shopping or social trips. Time-of-day tolls would cut rush-hour traffic jams.

Most people assume that increased rush-hour traffic is caused by more people commuting to and from work—hence the planners' concern with jobs-housing balance and staggered work hours. But our research has shown that it is *nonwork* travel that is booming. From 1977 to 1983, commuters made about the same number of trips to and from work during peak hours; off-peak work trips increased substantially. One reason for the shift: commuters were crowded out by other drivers. Nonwork travel grew by 30 percent in the morning peak, by 18 percent in the afternoon peak, and by 19 percent in off-peak hours. For the first time, *both* peaks had a majority of trips that were not work trips. This burst in activity pushed many work trips into the off-peak hours and is most responsible for the observed rush-hour jams.

Trips per person grew most in the "social and recreational" and "family and personal" (which includes shopping) categories. The absence of pricing explains the problem: travelers did not have adequate incentive to postpone trips to the off-peak hours. To remedy this situation, we would need a scheme to coax the "nonessential" trips into the off-peak hours, such as a system of time-of-day–specific tolls.

As *The Economist* noted in a recent cover story, entitled "Make Them Pay," road pricing can be implemented in ways that meet concerns about privacy: Drivers would be able to buy coupons in advance; electronic roadside monitors would be programmed not to trace paid-up peak-hour vehicles; only nonpaying passers would be identified and billed. Similarly, if people are afraid road pricing will be unfair to the needy, some of the revenue can be used to subsidize low-income drivers—leaving in place the incentives to take optional trips during off-peak hours.

Policymakers underestimate the extent to which market processes can help them relieve congestion through decentralization. They overestimate the capacity of expensive plans and bureaucratic intervention to make things better. Finally, they miss the opportunity to strengthen markets by imposing fees that reflect opportunity costs. The operators of private facilities subject to cyclical demand shifts—including theater, restaurant, and resort owners—need no lecture on the merits of peak-load pricing. It is time to exploit this opportunity and to jettison the mentality that applies 19th-century transit solutions to 21st-century traffic problems. ■

Peter Gordon is associate dean of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Southern California. Harry Richardson is a professor of economics and of urban and regional planning at USC.

JONATHAN NOUROK

THE SEDUCTION OF PLANNING

BY LYNN SCARLETT

IN JANUARY 1989, the township of Mt. Lebanon, Pennsylvania, issued a comprehensive plan "to lead Mt. Lebanon into the twenty-first century." The report intoned: "Goals not stated cannot be achieved."

Nearly 20 years earlier the same community, under the tutelage of a different set of policymakers, also prepared a comprehensive plan to ensure that the town's housing, transportation, and other needs were met. In the 1970 plan, a proposed mass-transit sky bus system was called the "brightest ray of hope" for the town's transportation needs. By 1988, there was no mention of the skybus. It had not been built, nor were any plans to build it described. And improving transportation remained among the planners' priorities.

Across a continent, in sprawling Los Angeles, with a population 400 times greater than Mt. Lebanon's, a distinguished committee appointed by Mayor Tom Bradley issued its report, *Los Angeles 2000*, in November 1988. Under preparation for three years, the report resolved that "we can plan wisely and manage the City's growth...or we can allow it to grow by default."

OUR CITIES SUFFER FROM THE BELIEF THAT ONLY GOVERNMENTS CAN PLAN GRANDLY AND ONLY GRAND PLANS WORK.

Urban policymakers—in large metropolises and small towns alike—have planning fever. Few communities have escaped the penchant of policymakers to nudge, prod, and force them along the path to someone's idea of utopia. Even statewide urban management plans are now the rage—in Maine, Vermont, Rhode Island, Delaware, Florida, and New Jersey. Details vary, but the thrust is constant: big urban problems require big urban plans.

The idea of urban planning is not new. In the early 1900s, cities began replacing the countryside as the predominant place of employment, and urban populations burgeoned. With growth came problems—crime, pollution, congestion, noise. Today we have vehicle exhaust; in 1900 New York had manure—tons of it. And with these problems has come an understandable urge to mitigate them.

The apparent chaos of cities provided fertile ground for proponents of urban planning. The term itself is seductive, evoking images of order and prospects of perfection. And so, by the '20s, zoning laws—an early planning tool—began to spell out what could be built where. Then came transportation planning and building codes and urban renewal schemes and redevelopment projects and, most recently, growth-management plans.

Yet urban problems persist. Even the keenest minds with the best intentions can't seem to set the urban landscape aright. How can this be?

With poetic incisiveness, Robert Burns penned in 1785 his often-repeated lines, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men / Gang aft a gley; / An' lea'e us naught but grief and pain, / For promised joy." Planners, or more specifically, public planners, still miss their mark.

THIS FAILURE IS NEITHER SURPRISING nor cause for despair. Much of the chaos that planners fail to mold into order is precisely the dynamism and diversity that drive economic prosperity. "The real problem is not control, but creativity," remarked Jane Jacobs, whose *Death and Life of Great American Cities* upset the discipline of public planning when it appeared in 1961. "Planners' greatest shortcoming...is lack of intellectual curiosity about how cities work. They are taught to see the intricacy of cities as mere disorder. Since most of them believe what they have been taught, they do not inquire about the processes that lie behind the intricacy." To the degree that planners fail to quell this perceived disorder, the vitality of cities fortuitously continues.

Although the apparent chaos may be an asset, not a plague, other problems are real. Vehicles clog highways. Pollutants foul the air. Solid wastes accumulate and outpace landfill capacity. Buildings and infrastructure decay. Housing costs soar. Such city woes deserve attention, but plans—even the current breed of "comprehensive," "imaginative," "regional" public plans—are not the answer (and are sometimes even part of the problem).

Consider a recent megaplan devised by Los Angeles–area legislators. This spring the Southern California Air Quality Management District (AQMD), whose jurisdiction includes all of the greater Los Angeles area, held public hearings on a wide-ranging pollution-abatement plan. The plan includes over 140 sets of regulations, spanning 18 years, that will touch every aspect of life among South Coast residents and businesses. Leaving virtually no stone unturned, the planners would ban trivial sources of pollution—some backyard barbecues, gasoline-powered lawn mowers, and swimming-pool heaters. And it would take on more-prominent pollution sources—vehicle exhaust, oil refinery emissions, and pollution from hundreds of other industrial and commercial processes.

One by one, industry representatives stood before AQMD officials at the March hearings. The proceedings went something like this. A representative of the water-heater manufacturers would stand up, praise the district for its "pathbreaking plan to deal with pollution," and then add that, unfortunately, the district had its facts all wrong about water heaters. They don't

function the way the plan described, commercial heaters differ dramatically from residential ones, and so on. Next came the swimming-pool representative, who also praised the district for its fine work but, alas, lamented that the proposed plan failed utterly to take into account actual swimming-pool heating technology. Then followed the barbecue manufacturers, the furniture makers, the oil companies, the butchers, the bakers, and the candlestick makers.

No doubt each business was attempting to protect its interests and mitigate any regulatory costs the new plan might impose—a point that student demonstrators righteously pointed out with signs denouncing all opponents of the plan as greedy businessmen out to destroy Planet Earth. But the self-interested pleas by representatives of various enterprises also illustrated a fundamental problem of planning: the knowledge problem.

As economist Thomas Sowell observed in *Knowledge and Decisions*, "ideas are everywhere, but knowledge is rare." How, Sowell then asks, "does an ignorant world perform intricate functions requiring enormous knowledge?"

Planning is one popular option. In common political parlance, planning refers to the use of centralized, public decisionmaking to define goals and spell out measures to achieve them. As a decisionmaking process, it is necessarily formal. It is about rule making and rule enforcement. As a public process, its prescriptions must be specific and leave little discretion to authorities implementing the plan. This inflexibility provides, as Sowell notes, "insurance against the discriminatory use of the vast powers of government. 'Red tape' is an implicit premium paid for this 'insurance.' "

Much of the chaos that planners fail to mold into order is precisely the dynamism and diversity that drive economic prosperity. The vitality of cities depends on disorder.

To spell out specific rules, planners need vast amounts of information. To make the AQMD plan work, for example, regulators must accurately predict demographic trends. They must have up-to-the-minute knowledge of the production processes of hundreds of businesses—and, ideally, be able to foresee what new technology might bring. They must be able to ascertain who is not complying with regulations—whether the violators are families enjoying their backyard barbecues or businesses surreptitiously emitting pollutants.

But public authorities, like the rest of us, are not omniscient. Moreover, the planning process is ill-suited to conveying information. In any centralized and relatively inflexible system, feedback about changing circumstances is slow to enter the decisionmaking loop. And acquiring knowledge about production processes and diverse community needs is expensive and time-consuming. In short, the process is inefficient—a point amply illustrated by the 20th-century performance of massive planning in the Soviet Union.

JILL BANASHEK

LICENSED TO
ELECTRONIC REPRODU

For seven decades the Soviet Union has tried to plan its economy. Now, Mikhail Gorbachev acknowledges the inefficiencies, persistent shortages, and corruption that once were reported mainly in underground East Bloc jokes. Even on quality-of-life issues, the Soviet experience is unimpressive: life expectancy has declined, mortality rates are up, pollution grays the horizon. So Soviet leaders have ushered in *perestroika*—a liberalization of the economy that includes more decentralized decisionmaking, some private ownership, more freedom. And the West, with some self-complacence, is cheering on these changes.

But what does the Soviet experience tell us? Forget the big debate—communism versus capitalism—and consider only the issue of planning. The Soviet system is a monumental demonstration of its pitfalls. Complex economic systems require the rapid conveyance of vast bits of information about the ever-changing supply of and demand for different resources.

The very complexity so often cited by city authorities to justify master plans in fact warrants just the opposite—decentralized decisionmaking coordinated by the actions of millions of individuals, each privy to information unavailable on a grand scale. Cities are but microcosms of the larger economy. What failed in the Soviet Union for its entire economy is bound to fail also in our cities—and for the same reasons.

SOME OF THE IMPETUS BEHIND planning stems from a very simple fallacy: that only governments plan grandly and only grand plans can bring order. In fact, of course, we all make plans and follow through on them. Many of us even achieve the goals we set out to accomplish. Food gets produced. Buildings get built. Cars get bought. No grand designer spells out a five-year plan for the millions of goods and services we produce and consume. Instead, we rely on that often-neglected process whereby prices reflect the demand for goods in relationship to their supply, informing myriad individual decisions.

Although the overall outcome subscribes to no one individual's particular vision of an ideal community, this is not for lack of planning. And this points up the real function of public plans. They do not establish plans where none exist; they instead replace the plans of individual citizens with those of government officials and the elite that curry their favor.

A telling demonstration of this is found in planners going so far as to instruct builders about the required appearance of their creations. Santa Barbara, California, for example, has decided that only red tile roofs, adobe-colored siding, and earth-colored signage will do for its commercial establishments. Baltimore's planners dictated that its transit facility must have "a cascade of steps," a clock tower, a cafe with umbrella tables, brick walkways, structures of no more than three stories, and so on. Creativity on the part of the developer was, of course, certainly encouraged.

Even as Frank Lloyd Wright was creating his most magnificent buildings, planners had already begun gingerly to impose their visions of grandeur on city development. In New York, one of his buildings had to be constructed behind a wall so that its unconventional concrete-block walls would not mar the view from the street. Today, the structure no doubt couldn't be built at all.

Many planners and citizens deem this issue a spurious one. We cannot concern ourselves with a little loss of freedom of choice when the order and aesthetic appeal of our cities is at stake, they assert. We have to make sacrifices, perhaps even of our freedom, to attain the clean air, pure water, and uncongested roads we all desire.

In fact, however, this loss of freedom will not achieve the intended results. The reasons why are well summarized by Sowell: "The Godlike approach to social policy ignores both the diversity of values and the cost of agreement among human beings." And, he adds, public planning "distorts the communication of knowledge."

Planning involves prescriptions, and prescriptions inevitably raise costs. Developers haggle with city planners to come to some compromise; polluters litigate until they find a technology that will achieve a mandated reduction in emissions; employees demand higher wages in order to keep their employers in compliance with mandated "alternative work schedule" plans. These are all costs of reaching agreements among parties affected by public plans and their accompanying regulations.

Planning also distorts costs by obscuring some costs and increasing others. Banning multifamily dwellings, for example, cuts the supply of housing, and overall housing costs increase. Separating residential from commercial areas drives people into their cars as they commute outside their communi-

PROS' PROSE

PLANNERS, like other professionals, share a common lingo. Scan a plan from Los Angeles or Newark, Wichita or Savannah, and you'll find the same buzzwords and literary visions. (*Vision*, incidentally, is a very "in" word.) Architects of these plans subscribe to at least three simple rules.

Rule One: When describing problems, do so in the most apocalyptic terms. If people are now spending 40 minutes to drive to work, make sure to predict that any day now they'll face a two-hour commute. Take no note of the fact that over the past 1,000 years, people have *always* adjusted their behavior—they've moved or changed mode of transport or changed jobs—to keep their commute somewhere between 20 and 40 minutes.

Above all convey a sense of urgency. A recent plan for Los Angeles had the right idea in announcing: "If we don't act now the future will inherit a wasted and polluted ecosystem."

Rule Two: When describing proposed solutions, do so in the most utopian language possible. How could citizens say no to this urban redevelopment project: it will "solve the functional and symbolic needs for all the activities that will occur with development." Its "pedestrian space" will be "amenably furnished," and its buildings will portray a "festive, village character and relate to the human scale." The area will be "enlivened by impromptu concerts" as people stroll around on "premium pavement materials." Last but not least, "a cascade of steps" will empty onto a plaza with a "sculpture of a whimsical character."

All plans, by the way, will bring "order and harmony" to urban living by applying "rational" and "innovative" thinking. Search in vain for the plan that admits its proposals are unoriginal, even though every plan puts forth virtually identical proposals.

Rule Three: Never call a spade a spade. Where one word used to do, planners use two or three. There are, for example, no parks in the modern urban plan. Instead, look for "passive leisure environments." Fountains, too, are passé, having been replaced with "central water features." Sidewalks are "pedestrian walkways." And people no longer merely *enjoy* parks—they engage in "self-directed enjoyment in unstructured openspace environments." A rose is a rose is a rose no more. At least not in urban-planning documents.

ties to work. Even as planners may resolve some particular perceived problem, their plans set in motion a series of unintended consequences and unacknowledged costs.

IF PUBLIC PLANNING WON'T WORK very well, are we destined to breathe foul air and creep along on congested highways? During the AQMD hearings, its proponents repeatedly charged that a vote against the plan was a vote for pollution. The contention is simplistic in its narrow presentation of the options.

The key to successfully resolving urban problems that seem to require master-planning is to understand existing decision processes. Some of the "chaos" that planners and established residents seem so eager to suppress is actually the tangible reflection of diverse preferences among different people. And some, as Jacobs observed, flows from the change that inevitably accompanies a dynamic economy. Efforts to eliminate this chaos cannot be accomplished without suppressing freedom and squelching economic prosperity. Such chaos is the sign of an economy that *is* working.

Public planners do not establish plans where none exist. They instead replace the plans of individual citizens with those of government officials and the elite that curry their favor.

But other urban characteristics, like air pollution and traffic congestion, result from decisionmaking processes in which important knowledge is not being conveyed. People are, for example, choosing to drive to work at rush hour all alone in their automobiles without recognizing that highway space is limited. Or factories are emitting pollutants into the air as if the atmosphere could, without loss of air quality, absorb the emissions in unlimited quantities. Or low-cost housing is not being built. Here the key issue is how best to convey the missing pieces of information so that people alter their behavior.

All decisions, public and private, are shaped by individual preferences combined with external incentives. To change the outcome of decisions, policymakers can either hope to change people's preferences or alter the incentives they face or ignore both preferences and incentives and legislate behavior. The latter course—the planning approach—erodes freedom and entails high information costs. And changing people's preferences is akin to the ill-fated efforts of various Communist regimes to fashion a "new man." Such efforts have failed even when governments resorted to Draconian "reeducation."

It is possible, however, to alter the incentives people face in their daily decisions. At the root of many urban problems, especially air pollution and traffic congestion, is the simple fact that air and roads are "free goods'—treated *as if* they are available in unlimited supply. Commuters pay nothing to use the roadways. Polluters pay nothing to dump byproducts into the atmosphere, and most of us capriciously toss out trash as if landfill were limitless. This means that vital information about the relative scarcity of air and roads and landfill is left out of the decisionmaking process.

Public planning focuses on the ill-effects of this imperfect process and imposes regulations designed to achieve some different outcome. The result: In the case of pollution, an AQMD-style compendium of edicts mandating how Los Angeles residents and businesses are to conduct their affairs and to combat the trash problem, we get mandated recycling programs. But such regulations still convey to commuters and polluters no information about the costs of their behavior.

Or, in the case of housing, planners "downzone" urban areas to reduce crowding and congestion. But by ruling out low-cost, high-density housing, they block the ability of the market to respond to people's needs.

Public planning, espoused in the name of harmony and rationality, actually provokes discord. It interrupts the flow of information from consumer to producer and back. And it does nothing to improve the flow of information about scarcities where the marketplace, with its price-coordinated transmission of knowledge, is not working.

Where price signals are absent, as in the use of air and roads, the most effective approach is to introduce price signals rather than presume to plan away the ill-effects of their absence. Create institutions—like air rights or toll roads—that get individuals to take into account the costs of their behavior. Faced with higher costs of driving alone down the freeway at rush hour, for example, some people will switch to public transit. Others will carpool. Still others may move closer to work.

And rather than overcoming the "out of sight, out of mind" mentality toward garbage with mandates and city-financed recycling plans, the more effective solution is to introduce pricing that varies depending on how much garbage people produce. City officials in Seattle did just that. Seattle citizens now have choices. They can buy more recyclable goods and produce less garbage to keep their trash bill low. Or they can maintain their old habits, but pay higher costs for the volumes of waste they generate.

Unlike planned solutions to traffic congestion and landfill scarcity, using price signals lets individuals make their own trade-offs, their own choices, about how to respond to changing circumstances. As Sowell neatly summarizes, "more options generally mean better results when the larger number of options includes all the smaller number of options." Planning excludes options. As a result, we are all made worse off. ■

Book Review Editor Lynn Scarlett is director of research at the Reason Foundation. She is currently working on a two-year study of growth/no-growth issues.

RUNAWAYS' REFUGE

BY CHARLES OLIVER

DURING THE DAY, TOURISTS stroll along Hollywood Boulevard, visiting Mann's Chinese Theater and the Walk of Fame, buying souvenirs in the many shops that line the street. At night, the tourists are gone, and Hollywood Boulevard becomes a sexual supermarket, a forbidding place. Cars cruise slowly down the street. On the sidewalk, prostitutes wait to be picked up by one of the drivers. It's no place for a child, but many of these prostitutes are children; some haven't even reached their teens.

But prostitutes and their customers aren't the only people on Hollywood Boulevard. Volunteers from Children of the Night also walk the street, talking to the kids, letting them know that help is available if they want to get off the street. The group also runs a 24-hour hotline that kids can call when they are in trouble. Children of the Night will find them shelter and get them medical or legal help if it is needed. It helps the older ones find jobs and apartments, and it places the younger ones in foster homes.

This spring, Children of the Night moved into new headquarters in Van Nuys. This small city in the San Fernando Valley north of Los Angeles seems far removed from the sleazy world of teen prostitution, and that's just the way Lois Lee, founder and director of Children of the Night, wants it. In addition to the group's headquarters, the site houses a 24-bed shelter for Lee's charges. In Van Nuys, she figures, the kids won't have to face their old pimps, customers, and drug dealers.

Blonde and pretty, Lee looks like a middle-class businesswoman, not someone who knows her way around the streets. But talk to her, and you quickly find that she is tough and passionate about the kids she tries to save.

In the late 1970s, Lee was a graduate student at United States International University. While researching a dissertation on the politics of prostitution, she found that social workers are often reluctant to help prostitutes. She blames this on the stigma that many people still attach to women who are sexually active. "There's still that underlying notion that you can't rehabilitate a prostitute."

Lee recalls one of the first girls she helped, a 12-year-old picked up by the police for prostitution. The police took the girl, a sexually abused runaway, to the children's welfare office, but they refused to accept her. "They didn't want her to contaminate the other kids," Lee says. "They literally told the police, 'She's a prostitute, it's against the law, it's a crime. Just arrest her and put her on probation.' "

The idea of arresting child prostitutes appalled Lee. She saw it as punishing the victim rather than the real criminals. She took the child home with her and helped place her in a private foster home. Lee's frustrations with the system led her to found Children of the Night in 1979.

JONATHON NOUROK

Hollywood attracts runaways from all over the country, but Lee finds that most of her kids fit a common profile. They are usually from white, middle-class homes. About 80 percent have been sexually abused, often by a family member. Most have at least one parent who is an alcoholic.

It seems odd that a child who leaves home to escape sexual abuse would turn to prostitution. But Lee explains that most of these kids are too young to get conventional jobs, and when they hit the streets they meet pimps who tell them that sex is all that men want from them. "And there's plenty of evidence of that for any young woman who walks down the street, whether it's the construction people whistling at her or Hollywood people grabbing at her and making all kinds of sexual offers," says Lee. "Many kids on the street say they'd rather be doing it with a stranger than at home waiting for their father to come into the bedroom."

Lee accepts no government funds. "They talk to a couple of 'experts' and then tell you how they want the money spent. Sometimes they haven't a clue as to what is really going on, or how much it costs." Children of the Night's funding comes from a number of individuals and foundations. One of the most important contributors, and the most controversial, is the Playboy Foundation. Lee's first two grants came from Playboy. "I had been working with adult prostitutes," she recalls, when Christie Hefner, chairman of Playboy Enterprises, "really pushed me to do something about the kids."

It might seem paradoxical for a woman who helps victims of sexual abuse to take money from Playboy, but Lee argues that magazines such as *Playboy* have nothing to do with the abuse that her charges have suffered. Alcohol, she believes, is a much more important factor. In 1985, Meese Commission investigators contacted Lee, wanting to speak to her kids. The investigators, it turned out, were trying to find children who would testify that pornography had played a part in the sexual abuse they had suffered. "I don't know a kid who has ever said that," Lee remembers replying, "but I'll ask." When she talked to the kids, she recalls, "they said the same thing they've said for years: 'My dad was a drunken asshole, and he was always drunk. It didn't have anything to do with *Playboy* or *Penthouse*.' " When asked why her father molested her, one girl said simply, "Because he was a sick son-of-a-bitch." The commission declined to hear testimony from Lee's children.

Lois Lee isn't sure how many kids she has helped. "Thousands" is all she will claim. Thousands more remain on the street. Some will end up dead. Others in jail. But some will call Children of the Night.

Charles Oliver is editorial assistant and staff writer at REASON.

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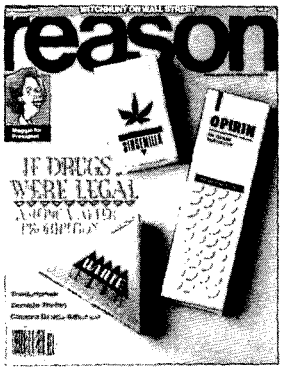

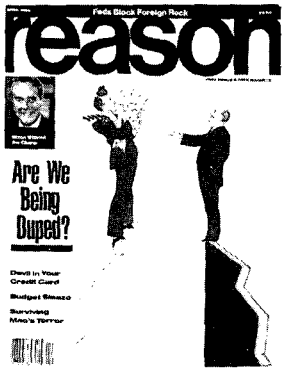

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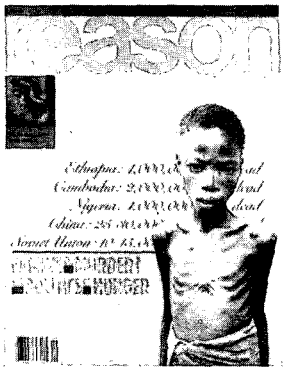

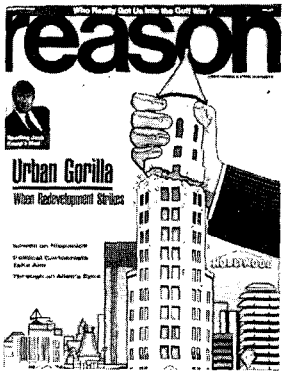

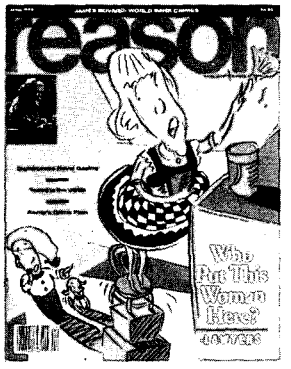

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The 976-ME Decade

BY JOHN DENTINGER

What would you call an outfit that threatens to give a million people your "unlisted number" unless you pay protection money?

A revisionist look at the Reagan years shows an appalling loss of the greed of the '70s, which Tom Wolfe dubbed "The Me Decade." Little is more "me-oriented" for consumers than deregulation. But it was Carter who deregulated trucking and airlines. Reagan zapped AT&T, but he let local phone monopolies off the hook. Big mistake.

Tell me an outfit doesn't need competition when it works like this: It lures kiddies into calling "976" dial-a-Santa numbers; it sues to get rid of "976" dial-a-porn numbers and raises its rates to pay the lawyers; then it charges us all a fee to take away the numbers.

In this same proud tradition, in a few tiny parts of the country, local phone monopolies are offering new services, such as telling you the number of the caller, so you can decide whether to answer. Such a deal, right? *They* know who's calling. They've always known. They've just never told *us*. Now they're going to charge us for it. It's like paying a royalty on your window every time you look to see who's at the door.

But I'm not complaining. I'll pay. I want it. I want all of them: call identifying, instant return-calling, priority-call signaling, selective call-snubbing, remote waffle-flipping—I want them all! And I want them yesterday.

And that's when we could have had it. For years, we could have had all these services and more—zillions more! features to boggle an Einstein!—if only local phone companies weren't fat and lazy monopolies. I say this for three reasons. One is because it's true. The second is that I want these services. But most important is that I am a libertarian. A libertarian is someone who wants you to have more choices in life, whether you like it or not. Choices like earning a living or starving, for example. I think the local phone companies would be a lot nicer to us if they had that choice open to them.

What if you didn't want this mind-numbing mélange of free-market phone features? No problem. You could choose a phone company that didn't offer those choices. In fact, if the "no-choice" choice were popular enough, they could charge extra for it. This is known as the marketplace at work.

For some reason, liberals find this annoying. And why not? Everything annoys them. Things like inequality—of income, housing, weight, height, eye color—you name it. Reality itself ticks them off. Kind of makes you wonder: why do liberals get to have unlisted phone numbers? That looks pretty damned unequal to me. I bet Jane Fonda has 10 of them. I think they should be nationalized. No liberal should be allowed to have 10 phones until everyone has 1. No one should be allowed to call Jane Fonda until everyone can call Jane Fonda. Collect.

And why do we let conservatives have phones at all? They don't like progress? I say give 'em a flat rock and a chisel.

What if Alexander Graham Bell had been a conservative? The first phone call would have been the last. "On second thought, Watson, forget it. I don't need this, and I don't need you. Hmmph... 'Watson'—just what kind of name *is* that, anyway?"

Why let conservatives have what wouldn't exist if they'd gotten their way? William Buckley once put it like this: his proud goal was "to stand athwart history yelling, 'Stop!'" Well, I want to stand athwart his trunk line yelling, "I'm sorry, the number you have reached doesn't live in this century."

That's the golden rule at work, and it's no problem for me. I'm an unrepentant techno-elitist. I have *three* unlisted phone numbers. One's for business, and a machine answers it. One's for personal calls, and nobody answers it. And one's for my computer. And *it* doesn't answer it. If I

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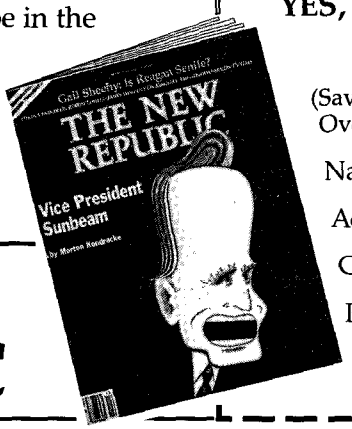

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Nirvana! The 976-ME Decade.

Tom Wolfe, call your office. Collect.

John Dentinger is a freelance writer in Los Angeles. He frequently writes for Playboy, *the* Chicago Tribune, *and other publications.*

A Door-Slamming Good Time

BY MICHAEL KONIK

The 1988-89 New York theater season was the first in five years to succeed without the aid of an Enormous British Musical, on whose sizable coattails the majority of Broadway productions usually ride. In recent years, ticket buyers who couldn't get into *Cats, Les Misérables,* or *The Phantom of the Opera* settled for whatever modest homegrown production they could find—straight plays, small "chamber musicals," even something off-Broadway. These productions survived on spillover business from the megahits; if they flourished, it was usually in the expansive shadow cast by Andrew Lloyd Webber's crashing chandeliers and roller-skating choo-choo trains.

This year the only gargantuan British musical import was *Carrie,* an adaptation of the Stephen King horror thriller, which expired in a $7 million bloodbath after three performances. Pressed to fill the theatrical vacuum, Broadway impresarios turned to one of the stage's oldest and most beloved genres and made a season of it. The 1988-89 New York theater season will be remembered as the Year of the Farce.

Five farces received major productions in New York this year, and three of them are certified smashes. If this were London, where plays like *No Sex Please, We're British* and *Bedroom Farce* enjoy perennial presentation, the glut of door-slamming comedies might not warrant comment. But Broadway hasn't had a real farce on the boards since 1984, when Michael Frayn's ingenious backstage fiasco *Noises Off* crossed the Atlantic. Now deliciously puerile plays featuring naked policemen and temporarily deaf socialites are filling the theaters.

Lend Me a Tenor: **a pebble of impropriety rolls inexorably into a boulder of disaster.**

Why are audiences clamoring to see these downright silly plays? There is certainly nothing new about the form—farce has been around since Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors,* where the ever-reliable misidentified-twins conceit inspires humorous mayhem. And farceurs like George Feydeau (*A Flea in Her Ear*) have been repertory stalwarts for hundreds of years. Our taste for frothy inanity, however lowbrow, has esteemed precedents.

Even if audience members have never attended a play before, they're bound to have seen derivations of farce on television. Shows like *I Love Lucy* and *Three's Company* honor the conventions of the form in nearly every episode: Lucy does something she's not supposed to do and tries to keep it from Ricky; in the process of covering up her initial transgression she either lies or unwittingly gets into more mischief, thereby compounding her problems; identities are mistaken, the heroine survives several near-misses, and we, the viewers, are the only ones who really know the truth.

This is the pleasure in farce: being in on the joke. The sensation is akin to accompanying a friend to a restaurant where, unbeknownst to your companion, a surprise party awaits. The farces in New York, like any good farce, treat theatergoers to a kind of "insider" knowledge. While most of the characters onstage are getting duped, we viewers know that nearly everything said by the hero is a desperate lie, and we squirm with the fibber when he seems to be trapped. It's vicarious mischief-making. To our delight, the naughty protagonist concocts exponentially preposterous stories to cover his tracks and somehow escapes justice. In most farces, the fibber, running out of equivocations, is finally forced to explain his outrageous behavior honestly. And when he does, of course, nobody believes him.

The scheme is much the same in Ken Ludwig's *Lend Me a Tenor,* Bruce Graham's *Early One Evening at the Rainbow Bar and Grille,* and Neil Simon's (yes, that Neil Simon) *Rumors.* In each play a pebble of impropriety—drunkenness, a sexual peccadillo—rolls inexorably into a boulder of disaster as the hapless sinner tries, usually with the help of a well-meaning but incompetent friend, to camouflage his indiscretion. These plays are necessarily short on character and long on plot. The best farces are propelled by nonstop action and have an air of hysteria: If, in *Run for Your Wife,* for example, John Smith, a bigamist

MARTHA SWOPE

cabbie, doesn't dash from wife to wife, even at the most inopportune moments, he'll be found out and punished. If, in *Rumors,* an important politician's apparent suicide attempt isn't obscured by his frantic friends, their careers will be ruined. The higher the stakes, the louder the laughs.

The British, who revel in real-life scandals (such as the Profumo affair), not only enjoy watching farces but have traditionally been master purveyors of the best-crafted works, most of them revolving around sex. These plays provide an unthreatening, salutary outlet for blowing off some good old-fashioned English repression. True to form, the two British farces playing in New York, *Run For Your Wife* and *What the Butler Saw,* use a sexual infelicity as instigation. Farce allows theatergoers to witness common human imperfections—dishonesty, infidelity, crudity—embodied by others. In Joe Orton's revolutionary *Butler,* a scalding masterpiece written 20 years ago, even normally taboo topics like homosexuality, pedophilia, and rape become rich sources of perverse humor.

The American farces, on the other hand, have little to do with sex or distasteful perversions. *Lend Me a Tenor,* in fact, concerns a greedy opera promoter's attempt to pawn off a Cleveland office assistant as Tito Merelli, the world's greatest tenor, who overdoses on sleeping pills moments before a sold-out charity performance. *Rainbow Bar and Grille,* a vaguely absurdist work, depicts a group of restaurant patrons awaiting the end of the world. In the American version of farce, especially in joke-king Neil Simon's *Rumors,* witty one-liners infect the purity of mindless door-slamming with something approaching thoughtfulness. While logic is key to farcical success, smartness isn't necessarily a virtue—we'd much rather see a philandering husband leap about the stage trying to hide his secretary's panties before his wife arrives than listen to borscht-belt quips about Jewish mothers and Italian tempers. Still, American-written farces are currently generating a lot of laughs—and a lot of ticket sales—in theaters formerly dedicated to bloated British musicals.

That American farces (along with their experienced English cousins) are flourishing on Broadway gives lie to the assumption that New York playgoers will only flock to immense, over-designed operatic spectacles. While *Lend Me a Tenor,* in particular, has a ravishing art deco setting, the only thing really necessary to stage a farce is five or six slammable doors, a handful of expert actors (Paxton Whitehead, Joseph Maher, Ron Liebman), and a sufficiently nimble script. For years, scenery-inspired gasping was about the only sound heard on the Great White Way. But the surfeit of invigorating farces this season makes it possible once again to sit in a Broadway theater and join audiences in uproarious, cathartic laughter.

Michael Konik is a journalist based in New York City.

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The Unbearable Lightness of a Protégé's Being

BY PAUL H. WEAVER

Judgment Day: My Years with Ayn Rand, by Nathaniel Branden
Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 416 pages, $21.95

Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden: If she was a tyrant, he was a hypocrite and a traitor.

Nathaniel Branden, the Objectivist psychologist who was Ayn Rand's protégé, lover, publicist, and cult-manager in the 1950s and 1960s, has written a fascinating memoir of the 18 years he spent at the side of the brilliant, somewhat loony woman who wrote *Atlas Shrugged*. It's not a biography—while Rand is a constant presence, she hovers in the background. The focus of the book is Branden himself; this is the self-portrait of a protégé. It's a tale of adventure and betrayal that casts light, not only on the Objectivist movement, but on the nature of the political intellectual in our time.

Branden grew up in Toronto in the 1940s as Nathaniel Blumenthal, son of a Russian Jewish immigrant clothing-shop owner. As a teenager, he felt alienated from the stolid world of his parents, "in which," as he recalls, "life was perceived not as an adventure but as a burden, and in which growing up was equated with giving up." Nathaniel longed for the "laughter and challenge and high-energy excitement" he'd experienced as a child. "I wanted to find heroes."

He found them in a book. "Howard Roark laughed," he read one day as he glanced at the first page of a novel his sister had left on the coffee table. By the time he'd finished *The Fountainhead*, his world had been turned upside down. The liberal pieties he's been brought up on suddenly seemed "preposterous" to him. They "missed the point of what life—and greatness—demanded. Not to sacrifice the self but to remain true to it at all costs—that was [Rand's] heroic vision." From age 14 to 18, "I read and reread the book almost continuously," Branden says. "It was the most important companion of my adolescence."

Nathaniel remained the obedient kid he'd always been, relating to Objectivist ideals the way he says his parents related to their liberal ideals: by cherishing them in his rhetoric and fantasies, but acting on the basis of what others expected of him—and by denying the contradiction. Then, as later in life, Nathaniel was an expert at denial. When he blocked out a problematic reality—as, for example, when he committed himself to the woman who was to become his first wife despite, he says, her lack of ardor and continuing involvements with other men—Branden experienced what he describes as "lightness," and "drama," or flight through air; that is, feelings of distance, numbness, dissociation, unreality.

Lightness and drama became a way of life for Branden when, as a UCLA freshman in 1950, he met Ayn Rand. He'd written Rand to ask what economic philosophy she believed in—"certainly not capitalism," he guessed—and she had replied with an invitation to visit her ranch house in the San Fernando Valley. It was love at first sight. Nathaniel, Ayn, and her husband, Frank O'Connor, talked from 8:00 in the evening to 5:30 the next morning. She invited Nathaniel to call later that day and to come back later in the week. In the 18 years that followed, Ayn and Nathaniel mentored and protégéd each other almost daily in a complex relationship that was both a wonderful success and a bitter failure.

Their intellectual collaboration was a triumph. They shared a genuine love of rationalist-individualist ideas and had complementary needs and strengths as intellectuals. Nathaniel was an ideal student—intelligent, needy, aggressive, deferential—and Rand a born teacher. He got an incomparable education. At a time

when she was lost in the world of her novel-in-progress—*Atlas Shrugged* took her 13 years to write—she got a sounding board for her ideas, an approving first reader for her chapters, and an impresario who recruited a circle of fawning disciples. Later, his Nathaniel Branden Institute lectures helped turn her ideas into an intellectual-political movement and crowned her as its queen.

Their personal relationship, however, was sick, sick, sick. Ayn's philosophy held that people should be honest with themselves and others. That's the last thing Ayn and Nathaniel were, according to Branden. They threw themselves into exploitive, dependent relationships. They were false to their hearts' desires. They coerced, manipulated, lied to, and hurt the people around them. They betrayed themselves and the values they held dear.

Ayn Rand, the exponent of heroic individualism, was an intensely dependent person in private life. In matters ranging from personal transportation (though a long-time Angeleno, she didn't drive a car) to friendship (she and Frank were socially isolated until Nathaniel began bringing his friends and relatives around) to stimulation (she took amphetamines daily to control her weight), Ayn relied on others for the material and psychic wherewithal to sustain daily life. This inability to stand on her own two feet, Branden's account suggests, reflected the deeper fact that the great American novelist of pride and self-esteem had very little regard for herself.

Seeking a sense of self-worth in the attention and approval of the people around her made Ayn domineering, possessive, jealous, manipulative. "You have no right to other concerns..., no right to casual friendships, no right to vacations, no right to sex with some inferior woman," she yelled when Nathaniel once said he'd like a little space. She demanded total loyalty from, and was highly suspicious of, the members of her circle (with wonderful irony, they called it "the Collective"). She and Nathaniel spent much of their time together evaluating and disciplining the Collectivists, and over time most were banished. One who wasn't: future Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan.

Ayn could be amazingly cruel. Before starting the affair with Nathaniel, he recounts, she asked his wife, Barbara, and her own husband for their consent, and from time to time she discussed with them the liaison's progress and problems. And she was a past master at making people feel guilty. At the end of the conversation in which they broke with each other, she pronounced this memorable curse: "If you have an ounce of morality left in you, an ounce of psychological health, you'll be impotent for the next 20 years! And if you achieve any potency sooner, you'll know it's a sign of still worse moral degradation."

Branden's book seethes with unacknowledged animus against first-wife Barbara (bride) and Rand herself (left).

If Ayn was a tyrant, Nathaniel was a hypocrite and a traitor. Like all protégés, he professed a childlike devotion to his mentor that, as a young adult aggressively using her patronage to further his career, he couldn't and didn't entirely feel. She was the active one, the initiator in their relationship; he was passive, reactive, opportunistic. From the beginning, and especially once their sexual liaison was established, Nathaniel felt the accustomed sensation of lightness in connection with the emotional side of their relationship. Yet her abuse didn't drive him away; it merely intensified his space-cadet numbness.

Nathaniel's hypocrisy deepened into a general pattern of betrayal that infected many of his relationships. In 1968, when at 38 (she was then 64) he gave Ayn a letter announcing the end of their sexual relationship of 14 years, he was still married to (though not living with) his first wife and for seven years had been increasingly involved with a third woman he would later marry. He had become so detached from the moral and psychological reality of human relationships that he felt he didn't need to tell Ayn about the new woman, and he imagined that after the break he and Ayn would remain friends. "You bastard. You nothing. You fraud," Ayn shrieked when she got the drift of the letter. "Everything you have professed to be is a lie."

Branden says of this reaction that it was vintage Ayn, rewriting history to deny the pain she was feeling. But Branden's book, taken as a whole, suggests that he had compromised himself so deeply for so long in connection with so many relationships that her judgment, far from being a flight from reality, was actually pretty close to the truth.

Sometimes Branden appears to sympathize with Rand's perspective. At a number of points in this book, he writes as an older and wiser man who in the twilight of his middle years has set himself the task of revisiting the folly of his youth with new insight and compassion.

In this spirit, Branden argues that her paranoia and his own hypocrisy teach a lesson about the flaws of Objectivism. Ayn and her circle, Branden says, insisted on "unbreached rationality," by which they meant "a commitment to use one's mind to the fullest of one's ability, a respect for facts, reality, and logic, and a refusal to indulge [mere] wishes by evading knowledge or evidence." In theory, it's a fine idea. In practice, Branden says, it was a formula for elevating the mind at the heart's expense and for denying or repressing emotions.

Now the scales have fallen from his eyes, Branden suggests at a number of points. He's learned that emotion and mystery have a necessary place in the human scheme of things; that while rea-

son is a virtue, rationalism is a destructive vice; that being true to yourself can be the most difficult of tasks. In these passages, Branden is in effect confessing error and imploring others to take to heart the lessons he learned at such a cost to himself and those around him.

Most of the time, however, *Judgment Day* is an exercise in self-aggrandizement. From the vengeful title onward, the book seethes with unacknowledged animus against first-wife Barbara (author of a successful and mostly adulatory biography, *The Passion of Ayn Rand*) and Rand herself. In memory as in life, Branden relates to them with veiled hostility. He dwells on their unattractive traits and actions and describes them with a minimum of context.

By contrast, the narrative puts his own actions in a sympathetic and rational context—Branden, we soon realize, isn't a man to tell a lot of stories at his own expense. I don't know how many times Branden reports infidelities on Barbara's part and fits of jealous rage on Ayn's. But on the one occasion when Branden purports to explain why he rejected Ayn, he merely says, as if reporting an objective fact of scientific physiology, that a 64-year-old female body lacks sex appeal. At length it becomes apparent that Branden at 60 isn't in much better touch with his feelings and motives than he was at 20. He's still a prisoner of lightness.

In the closing pages, Branden shifts from self-exculpation to self-glorification. "We were ecstasy addicts," he declares. "No one can understand Ayn, or her appeal to people, or the force that held all of us together back in New York, who doesn't understand that there exists in human beings [a] need for an ecstatic state of consciousness. That's what Ayn transmitted through her novels, and that's what we fell in love with and fought against leaving, because it was through her that we first entered that other plane."

Branden apparently means it. He says that in the effort to satisfy their need for ecstasy, people should do whatever turns them on. If sex is your thing, Branden counsels, get thee into the sack. If religion, athletics, drugs, or war is what you get off on, he declares, do it and don't look back. And if, he implies, the quest for ecstasy draws you into a 14-year-long exploitive affair with a married woman old enough to be your mother whom you don't love and eventually abandon in full view of both betrayed spouses, that's great, too. Branden wants us to understand that he has no regrets, that he's hall-of-fame material. At the same time, he also lets us know that he's getting his ecstasy in less problematic ways now—from a happy marriage to his third wife, Devers, and from his writing and therapeutic practice dealing with self-esteem and romantic love.

For me, this is an often tantalizing and frustrating book. On the one hand, it affords a uniquely intimate glimpse of Ayn Rand and, through her, of the world of a modern political intellectual movement, with its authoritarian patrons and hypocritical protégés, its pretensions to scholarship, its rabid sectarianism, its mind-bending hypocrisy. I can't think of another nonfiction work that probes these important and ill-appreciated topics as deeply or that reflects my own experience of the intellectual world as well. And as someone who has tried his hand at memoir, I'm in awe of Branden's achievement in courageously and often movingly bearing witness to so intimate and vast a range of personal experience.

On the other hand, this book has a credibility problem. It's not just that Branden isn't a disinterested witness or that he hasn't fully owned up to his part in the story he's telling. The problem is that it's hard to trust a man who, after everything that happened and everything he says he felt, insists that the only thing amiss in his relationship with Rand was an age difference that made it inevitable that eventually he'd lose interest in bonking the old girl. Or who, at the end of a wrenching, dark, real-life tragicomedy, sees fit to get off stage with a trite credo of '60s narcissism and nihilism. After all he's been through, first as protégé and more recently as a memoirist, Nathaniel Branden deserves a larger, more humane perspective on what he's seen and felt than the one he projects in his book.

Paul H. Weaver, author of The Suicidal Corporation, *is John M. Olin Media Fellow at the Hoover Institution.*

AIDS Incantations

BY PAUL VARNELL

Private Acts, Social Consequences, by Ronald Bayer
New York: Free Press, 282 pages, $22.95

In the wake of Randy Shilts's magisterial account of the AIDS epidemic and governments' failure to respond to it, *And the Band Played On*, the stream of AIDS books has swollen substantially. Ronald Bayer's *Private Acts, Social Consequences* takes up the challenge of recovering and articulating the arguments for and against a variety of policy proposals intended to cope with the little-understood epidemic.

Consider the range of proposals: close gay bathhouses in major cities; test all donated blood for antibodies to HIV (the suspected cause of AIDS); screen various identifiable populations (gays, prisoners, military recruits) for antibodies; exclude all gay men from donating blood; trace the sexual contacts of those with antibodies; isolate and even quarantine those infected with AIDS; produce sexually explicit "safe sex" educational materials for gays, the general public, and school children. Initially, some of these proposals seemed wise and prudent, others pointless and ineffective, and yet others clearly counterproductive.

The ongoing arguments, counterarguments, and resultant compromises between public health authorities and leaders of the gay community provide the dynamic of Bayer's book. In each case,

Bayer, a professor at the Columbia University School of Public Health, poses the issue and details the arguments as they developed. As journalism, his work is comprehensive and valuable. And as a sometime participant in those arguments, I found my adrenaline once again rising as I was reminded of what seemed to be at stake and how uncertain the outcome was at the time. Unexpectedly, this potentially bland book on public health policy became gripping reading.

Take just one example. Seen by some as symbols of gay sexual irresponsibility, bathhouses where gay men did sex seemed plausible targets for closure. But in fact, most gays did not go to bathhouses, and it turned out they were statistically insignificant in HIV transmission. Moreover, some bathhouses not only distributed condoms but also were a locus for educating those who would, in all likelihood, continue to be sexually active, bathhouses or no. And so the arguments went back and forth.

Public health has a long authoritarian tradition, which Bayer acknowledges. Its policy tools were developed long before modern preventive medicine and the advent of a clear understanding of disease transmission. Then too, until recent times, courts gave health authorities broad powers.

It is not surprising that in most of the arguments over AIDS policy, public health authorities faced gay community groups who, along with their civil liberties allies, were unwilling to abandon recently hard-won privacy rights and due-process safeguards even—especially—in the face of a devastating epidemic. Gay leaders repeatedly pointed out that despite government appeals to the "public good," "collective well-being," and "community health," people were infected with AIDS one by one and by behavior that they could easily be educated to avoid.

Bayer stigmatizes gays' preference for widespread education efforts as based on an "ideology of individualism," an "asocial individualism," "a narrow premise of self-defense," and even "an individualism that would, ironically, subvert the very meaning of intimacy." Yet to accept such an analysis would be very much in error. This "individualism" was no mere ideology but resulted from the felt experience of most gay men, coping with hostility and prejudice on a daily basis. Bayer passes all too lightly over sodomy laws just recently upheld by the Supreme Court. He averts his gaze from the conspicuous homophobia of national figures such as Sens. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.), Rep. William Dannemeyer (R-Calif.), former Atty. Gen. Ed Meese, and former Education Secretary William Bennett. Government inattention to AIDS during the early years of the epidemic led many gays to suspect that the Reagan administration simply wished it to take its natural course. None of this strengthened faith in the sincerity of governments.

Having condemned gays for "asocial individualism," Bayer is stunned to find that the gay community brought the virus transmission rate down to near-zero.

Slowly, public health authorities came to realize that, whatever their desires, they needed the confidence of the gay community. Otherwise they would scare off—"drive underground"—the very people they most needed to reach with messages about antibody testing and safer sexual behavior. Even contact tracing required the trusting cooperation of people willing to provide names and addresses of sexual contacts.

Ultimately, public health policy had to take into account the concerns and desires of all the affected parties. Policy was forged in the matrix of public opinion and the limited trust of target groups. This leads Bayer to assert his central contention: health policy is essentially political in nature—"the pragmatics of public health" differ substantially from "the logic of public health."

Bayer sees public health authorities as fumbling their way toward what should have been their goal at the outset—generating a "Culture of Restraint and Responsibility" among those at risk. He repeats this phrase like an incantation 18 times throughout the book before he finally explains it in one disappointing paragraph at the end. It amounts to no more than a recommendation for more explicit safe-sex education, drug treatment programs, needle-exchange programs, anonymous antibody testing, nondiscrimination against the infected, and so forth. Yet all these recommendations have been accepted, even urged, by the gay community. It is hard to imagine what Bayer conceives to be his own contribution.

Health officials have, in fact, resisted almost all these proposals. Instead, they apparently preferred, when they responded at all, high-profile but largely useless symbols such as closing bathhouses or threatening to quarantine an occasional infected prostitute—as though people had no way to protect themselves from such a person and exchange of money constituted a risk factor. Bayer even quotes one Texas health official as admitting, "You've got to look at the public's reaction....People want to have some reassurance that public health agencies are in control of the situation." In short, AIDS is a public relations problem. Oddly, Bayer seems to approve.

In fact, it was precisely in view of the paralysis or merely symbolic responses of health authorities that gay men realized they needed to take action on their own. Having condemned gays for "asocial individualism," Bayer is stunned to find that the gay community brought the virus transmission rate down to near-zero. He cannot acknowledge that the "protect yourself" message not only worked but was simply the old-fashioned American virtue of personal prudence based on old-fashioned "enlightened self-interest."

Nor, contrary to Bayer, is that individualism inconsistent with intimacy or a sense of community—or their common root, friendship. Gays begged health officials for help in educating their communities, pleaded for help as they took care of the sick, begged for better research on the disease. And as health officials turned a deaf ear, gays wrote about the disease for the gay press. They printed obituaries about the dead, paid for and passed out safe-sex pamphlets, distributed condoms, expanded old gay health clinics to try to handle the enormous new burden of AIDS. They opened residences for people with AIDS, conducted fundraisers, held auctions, charged entry fees at popular bars. They closed many bathhouses—by not attending them. They lobbied the mainstream media for better, more-accurate coverage of the disease. In short, they created their own Culture of Restraint and Responsibility.

In fact, the gay community is an excellent modern example of a rapidly formed volunteer effort emerging to cope with a governmentally neglected emergency. Even now, gays have formed Community Research Initiatives to test proposed AIDS treatments in the light of the Food and Drug Administration's sluggish response. Bayer, with his bias toward government, misses the real story. Since he is so demonstrably an able journalist, that is a shame.

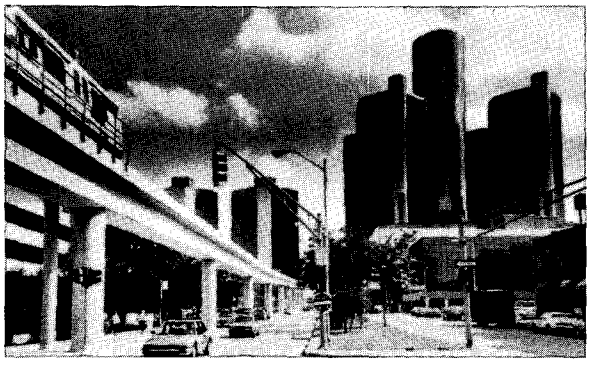
Paul Varnell writes for the Windy City Times.

The Soul of the City

BY DAVID T. BEITO

City: Rediscovering the Center, by William Whyte
New York: Doubleday, 386 pages, $24.95

Although William Whyte does not claim *City* to be in the same tradition as Jane Jacobs's seminal *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the two books bear some striking resemblances. Both authors celebrate urban diversity and castigate the deadness and uniformity that has overtaken many sections of America's cities. Whyte, much like Jacobs, attacks practices that "dullify" downtown. It is almost as if, Whyte concludes, war had been declared on city streets, parks, and architecture.



The design of buildings, streets, and parks, Whyte observes, often goes against the grain of human nature.

Like Jacobs, Whyte points out that the very design of many modern megastructures, including housing projects, malls, and concourses, has been based on a destructive premise: fear of the street. In contrast to earlier eras, for example, façades are frequently turned away from the street. Such practices have not only served to destroy the vibrancy of street life (as exemplified by chance meetings, peddlers, and street entertainers); they have also caused crime. The crowded street, with its myriad unofficial "police," from hawkers to stoop-sitters, had always been the best form of crime control.

Many reviews have focused on the similarities between *City* and *Death and Life* and in particular on each book's ringing defense of urban diversity. Unfortunately, critics have missed the profound disagreement between Jacobs and Whyte over the meaning of diversity.

For Jacobs, it is largely a spontaneous process of trial-and-error experimentation. Failure is as necessary for the achievement of diversity as is success. By its very nature, the process cannot be directed by a central planning office. Indeed, the imposition of master plans only serves to stifle human creativity and impose uniformity. In Jacobs's view, planners do best when they work to foster an open *and* unpredictable environment for learning through experimentation.

For Whyte, on the other hand, diversity can and should be planned or imposed from above. Armed with stop-action photography (the book is generously illustrated), Whyte observes that the design of buildings, streets, and parks frequently goes against the grain of human nature. Whyte wants to do more than merely proselytize, however. He wants to mandate. Indeed, he supports additional regulations that would result in a society far more controlled, and hence in many ways less diverse, than the status quo. If there are not enough plazas, Whyte concludes, builders should be forced to put them in. Most draconian of all, he would force large-scale developers, as part of the "privilege" of being allowed to build, to lay aside 50 percent of their ground-floor front space for retail stores.

"Mixture is too vital," he asserts, "to be left up to the presumably objective verdict of the market place. It seems rigged against the diverse and the modestly scaled because it *is* rigged." Yet even a superficial survey of downtown megastructures (malls, stadiums, highways) constructed in the last 30 years would reveal a plethora of subsidies, ranging from low-interest loans to almost routine acts of confiscation. As Jacobs so effectively testified, whole blocks composed of "modestly scaled" shops in America's cities have been leveled through eminent domain in the name of redevelopment. Against this record of political failure, Whyte's willingness to grant even more powers to politicians, albeit in the service of different ends, strains credulity.

WILLIAM H. WHYTE

The major constituencies for *City*'s program would seem to be regulators in search of new opportunities to ply their trade and, to a lesser extent, the middle-class suburban shopper looking for downtown retail bargains and cultural edification. The sections of the book addressing problems of the less-affluent urbanite are especially unsatisfactory. An illustration is Whyte's brief comment on the almost legendary public-housing fiasco, St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe housing project.

The high-rise project was initially hailed by leading architects for its progressive design. Nineteen years after construction, crumbling because of vandalism, disrepair, and crime, it had to be demolished. Whyte sums up the project's fate with the revealing query, "Did we have to wait for the dynamiting of the Pruitt-Igoe housing project...to see that the design approach was wrong?" This, then, is the key prescription running throughout *City*: fix the design, and all else follows. Virtually nowhere, except for an excellent exposition on the virtues of street peddlers, is there discussion of the negative role played by government paternalism and regulations in undermining community institutions, self-reliance, and entrepreneurship.

Design is important, and Whyte offers many valuable lessons on this score. The quality of design, however, is a poor guide for understanding some of the more remarkable inner-city success stories of recent years. Several public-housing projects, such as Kennilworth-Parkside in Washington, D.C., have witnessed a dramatic decline in crime and welfare dependency since the introduction of tenant management and ownership. St. Louis has a long history of privately owned streets, many of them nestled between extremely run-down blocks of the city. As Oscar Newman showed in *Community of Interest*, these private streets have much lower crime rates and higher property values than surrounding public streets.

There is little that is distinctive in the design of Kennilworth-Parkside or St. Louis's private streets to account for their success. Much more important is the fact that the residents of these developments enjoy property entitlements in the com-

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JUDGMENT DAY

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NATHANIEL BRANDEN

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mon areas, including the right to exclude criminals.

Whyte, however, has a rather negative opinion of property rights, as evidenced by his comments on developer-owned private plazas. In his view, these areas should be true public spaces open to all, including "undesirables" such as winos. He has a point in chiding overzealous private-plaza security guards, but it is a small price to pay when compared to the crime-ridden character of genuine public spaces such as New York's Central Park. What shopping mall, private street, or plaza could compete with such a poor record of crime control? Again, Whyte offers little but his poor-design refrain. Not surprisingly, he seems at a loss to explain the high crime rates of cities he regards as the most visually pleasing, such as New York City (a city, incidentally, not well known for its respect of property rights).

Despite these criticisms, there is much to learn from *City*. The discussion of the positive (and largely unsung) role of street entertainers and peddlers is fascinating. There are valuable chapters on the virtues of gentrification and the increasingly prevalent, and largely private, sale of sun easements. Although Whyte's overall theme is hostile to the prerogatives of private ownership, the examples he cites often illustrate innovative property-rights solutions. In New York City, for example, some store merchants are beginning to compromise with peddlers by charging a rental fee for use of their sidewalk space. Unlike most scholarly tomes, *City* is written in an engaging, easy-to-read, and provocative style. In this age of dull-as-dishwater academic literature, these are no small virtues.

David Beito, who teaches urban history at the University of Nevada, is currently editing a book, The Voluntary City.

Sales Tales and Satire

BY PAUL HORNAK

It Only Hurts When I Laugh, by Stan Freberg
New York: Times Books, 273 pages, $19.95

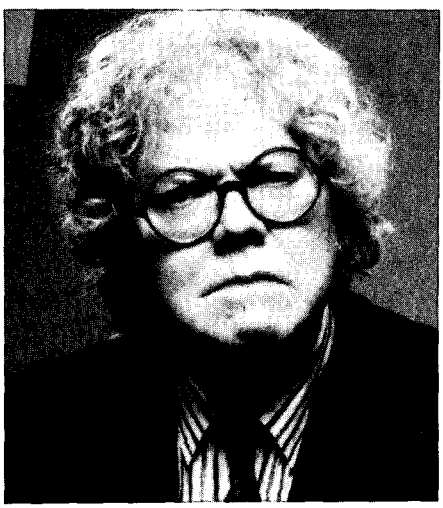
A conversation between the reviewer's left-brain and right-brain personalities, inspired by the unlikely interior dialogue that wraps up Stan Freberg's otherwise unpretentious memoir. The more severe, left-brain persona is asking the questions.

Q: Isn't Freberg responsible for "Eight great tomatoes in that little bitty can"? I'm not sure I can stand 200 pages from a mentality like that.

A: Lighten up! It made millions for Contadina. Remember his TV spot for Chun King? "Nine out of ten doctors recommend," with all but one of the doctors Chinese? How's that for a slap at reverse discrimination, circa 1958?

Q: So he's a clever pitchman. Can't we get sales tales from *Advertising Age* and move on to something, well, intellectual?

A: *Take an Indian to lunch this week*
Show him we're a regular bunch



Stan Freberg: satire broad as the battleship *Missouri*, subtle as a banana pratfall.

this week.

That's Freberg, and it wears very well 30 years on. The man's no slouch. He was lampooning "Heartbreak Hotel" before anybody thought Elvis was funny. His corporation's "great seal" is a picture of a seal wearing sunglasses, over the motto "Art for Money's Sake." And besides, he's for limited government.

Q: A salesman who thinks he's a satirist—what kind of schizoid is he? It says he charges $50,000 up front and won't let the client change a word. With an adman like that, who needs product sabotage? Nope, I'm going to pan this book.

A: You sound like an ad executive from central casting. Sourpusses like you have been trying to torpedo the Freberg-style commercial since the '50s. He walks in bursting with ideas for some scripts about Clark Smathers, a salesman who can't convince grocers to put Kaiser aluminum foil on their shelves. One spot has Smathers crinkling foil to make shoes for his kid. It ends: "There are many uses for Kaiser foil." What happens? A Young & Rubicam meathead pins Freberg to the wall and threatens him. But in a few months that campaign puts Kaiser foil into 43,000 new outlets. Now that's the power of laughter.

Q: I'm more interested in this satire business. Are his targets politically correct?

A: He was going to slam the H-bomb on his radio show, but CBS made him cut it. In "Green Chritma" he lays into overcommercialization:

Deck the hall with advertising
What's the use of compromising

Stuff like that. Capitol tried to suppress it.

Q: Of course he cried censorship?

A: Of course. But he's a happy-go-lucky guy. He picks himself up, dusts himself off, and starts all over again. Your basic capitalist.

Q: But we're talking left-leaning ideas here.

A: Right. He's your basic *American* capitalist, the kind that gives a quarter million to American Enterprise Institute and the same amount to Brookings, just to spread the wealth.

Q: This is the free marketplace of ideas, tax-deductible of course. Well, at least Freberg seems to home in on generalized idiocy: hypocrisy, greed. That's acceptable. It says he's the son of a Baptist minister. Is there much Carteresque preaching?

A: None. He once did a commercial for the Presbyterians that ran: "The blessings you lose may be your own." But he leaves it out of the book.

Q: Religious censorship. I suspected a satirist-adman would have problems being consistent.

A: He also was a great puppeteer. There are hilarious stories of him and Daws Butler writing *Time for Beany* in parked cars and condemned buildings. We're talking prehistoric TV, back when Cecil the Seasick Sea Serpent was an old sweat shirt sewn together by a script-writer's wife. The show wasn't just for kids; there was clever wordplay, adult situations....Albert Einstein was a fan. How's that for intellectual appeal?

Q: I'm still worried that a voice of the Goofy Gophers ranks himself with Robert Benchley, Alexander Woolcott, and Dorothy Parker. Ernie Kovacs called him "a multiple incarnation of Fred Allen, Don Quixote, and Donald Duck." So far, I've heard a lot about his Donald Duck side. But where's the beef?

A: Look, he may not be Jonathan Swift, but Stan Freberg is quintessential American satire, broad as the battleship *Missouri* and subtle as a banana pratfall. Millions love him. After he boosted sales for Chun King, the owner, Jeno Paulucci, pulled him down La Cienega Boulevard in a rickshaw.

Q: The thought of a serious satirist riding a rickshaw down La Cienega makes me fear for the health of American culture. Because of Freberg, *all* commercials are now "funny" commercials. Because of him, the line between humor that criticizes and humor that sells has been hopelessly blurred. If it had been Freberg instead of Swift, we could have gone to our neighborhood supermarket and bought microwaveable Irish children.

A: In disposable containers. You have no sense of humor, but American culture has. We can laugh as we buy. We can be true-blue and also self-critical. And as long as we keep cultivating the ability to hold conflicting ideas simultaneously, there'll be a living for guys like Freberg.

Q: I guess I'll have to praise the book.

A: You sound like it gives you pain.

Q: Read the man's title.

Paul Hornak, a free-lance writer, frequently reviews books for REASON.

Bitter Fruit

BY RONALD BAILEY

The Poverty of Communism, by Nick Eberstadt
New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 317 pages, $24.95

"We will bury you," promised Khrushchev during his visit to the United States in 1959. He had in mind not just the growing Soviet nuclear arsenal, but also the supposed productive power that central planning would unleash. Thirty years later, the Soviets have managed to more than hold their own in the arms race, but they have decisively lost the prosperity race. Their economy is barely half the size of the U.S. economy; GNP per capita is 45 percent that of the United States, and economic growth has stalled for most of this decade. Soviet life expectancy has dropped, and infant mortality rates remain at Third World levels.

Things were not supposed to turn out this way. For more than a century, communists the world over have promised that application of their "science" could eliminate social injustice, inequality, and poverty—all evils supposedly peculiar to exploitative capitalist societies. All that communists demand to achieve utopia is that people relinquish their liberty in exchange for economic security.

In this century, a third of the world's people have been forced to take this bargain. Communists have ruled in the Soviet Union for 70 years, in China and Eastern Europe for 40 years, and in Cuba, 30 years. Enough time has passed for

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Marxist science to bear its fruit. And it is bitter.

Demographer Nick Eberstadt has spent years analyzing statistics and reports issued by these Communist governments. He is a visiting fellow at the Harvard University Center for Population Studies and visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. In his collection of scholarly essays, *The Poverty of Communism*, Eberstadt carefully details the failure of Communist regimes everywhere to meet their citizens' material and health needs. As Eberstadt writes: "It is today fashionable to argue that whereas Communist rule deprives its subject populations of freedom, it nevertheless provides them with bread." In fact, this is not so.

The book has not garnered the attention it deserves. In part, I suspect this is because the publisher is notorious for failing to promote its books. In addition, its message is unwelcome in media precincts dominated by America's left-leaning intelligentsia.

The Poverty of Communism is especially timely because the recent, heartening trend of some Communist governments to admit to error confirms many of its arguments. For example, the Soviet government disclosed just recently that 20 percent of its people live in poverty. In addition, its satellite Hungary has confessed to a 25 percent poverty rate. By contrast, the U.S. official poverty rate is 13.5 percent. A family of four falls below the Soviet poverty line if they live on less than $500 per month. The comparable U.S. figure is $1,007 per month, twice as much. Much to the dismay of Marxist-Leninists everywhere, poverty is clearly not restricted to capitalist societies.

Many of Eberstadt's essays expose the ongoing health crisis in the Soviet Union. "The U.S.S.R. is the first industrialized nation to experience secular peacetime decline in its life expectancy," he observes. In the early 1980s, life expectancy for Soviet men dropped from 67 years to 62 and for women from 76 to 73, levels not seen since 1964. And the Soviet Union is no longer alone is this respect—the citizens of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary now also are experiencing shortened life expectancies.

Communists promise bread in exchange for freedom. But they don't deliver.

Infant mortality is a key measure of the efficacy of a country's health care system. Recent figures put the rate of Soviet infant mortality at 40 per thousand—about four times the U.S. rate—placing the USSR in the same category as Panama and Tonga. A particularly horrific example of substandard Soviet health care came to light recently. More than 10 infants from the Soviet town of Elista were infected with the AIDS virus because the hospital reused unsterilized needles to vaccinate them. This is how AIDS was transmitted so rapidly throughout impoverished sub-Saharan Africa. "The spectacle of an industrial country embarking on a path toward preindustrial standards of health is deeply disturbing," notes a sympathetic Eberstadt.

Another much-ballyhooed claim by Communist dictators is that they have made great strides toward eliminating illiteracy. Literacy campaigns lasting sometimes just months purportedly yield spectacular results. But hold on! If the skills of reading and writing were so easily acquired by the illiterate, the millions of hours in the classroom and the billions of dollars the United States spends on education would surely have borne far better results in our inner cities than they have.

Eberstadt shows that the seemingly enormous strides in literacy made by Cuba, "the socialist showcase," result from careful redefinitions and distortions of data. Castro claims that under his beneficent rule, Cuba's illiteracy rate dropped from 75 percent in 1953 to only 5 percent by 1979. Those figures are fudged. In fact, fully 76 percent of Cuba's

Book Hints

The 13th House, a first novel by Pakistani-born Adam Zameenzad (New York: Random House, 202 pp., $21.95), is a surreal account of a "set of lives...tyrannized by corrupt politics, bureaucracy, and religious powers." *Publishers Weekly* likens Zameenzad's biting, imaginative style to that of Jonathan Swift.

Another surrealistic gem is Soviet writer Vladimir Sorokin's **The Queue** (New York: Readers International, 200 pp., $16.95/$8.95). Sorokin's portrayal of people spending days and nights in a Moscow queue—waiting for we know not what—conveys a glimpse of the broader Soviet reality. The tale is one long sequence of dialogues among those who wait endlessly. As good as the dialogue itself is the brilliant introduction by Soviet specialist Sally Laird.

In his latest novel, **Solomon's Knife** (New York: Franklin Watts, 288 pp., $18.95), Viktor Koman fashions a science fiction thriller around a revolutionary surgical procedure, "transoption." Through this procedure, a fetus can be transferred from the womb of one woman to that of another. Koman's tale turns on the drama resulting from the pioneering, but clandestine, use of the procedure and evokes controversies similar to those now attached to abortion, surrogate motherhood, and other reproduction technologies.

On a lighter note is Florence King's collection of essays, **Reflections in a Jaundiced Eye** (New York: St. Martin's, 198 pp., $15.95)—an antidote to those who forever take things seriously. In her opening essay, King takes on "two non-beach books, *Cultural Literacy* by E. D. Hirsch and *The Closing of the American Mind* by Allan Bloom." Calling herself a Bloom and Hirsch girl, she goes on to recount her own educational experiences, which, among other things, left her qualified at the end of college "to do nothing except crossword puzzles in ink." King's book is a good read through and through, especially for those who can still laugh about our foibles. —**L. S.**

population over 15 years old was literate in 1953. And Cuba's 1979 figures actually counted only Cubans between the ages of 15 and 49—the adults most likely to be literate. Adjustment for those left out by Cuba's census yields an illiteracy rate of 7 to 10 percent. This is progress, but Eberstadt points out that "revolutionary Cuba's performance in dealing with illiteracy has been no better than that of its peers in the Western Hemisphere." Caribbean countries such as the Dominican Republic, Grenada, and Trinidad-Tobago all started with rates similar to Cuba's and by 1970 had reduced illiteracy well below Cuba's rate.

Eberstadt also packs in a great deal of information about the failures of other Communist countries. For instance, productivity in China fell by more than a third between 1952 and 1979. "No other economy, be it market-oriented or centrally planned, has been thought to suffer such a profound, and secular, erosion of productivity," concludes Eberstadt. The irony is that Communism took the Chinese people, not on Mao's "Great Leap Forward," but on a "Great Leap Backwards." Only now, when Chinese Communism is being dismantled, is productivity increasing.

Communist regimes have long claimed that "they were building a system whose ability to improve life for the common people could not be equalled, and insisted that other systems of governance less effective in aiding the poor...had no right to survive." Eberstadt conclusively proves that Communist regimes are unsuccessful even on their own terms. Unfortunately for humanity, it is unlikely that these regimes will follow their own prescription and relegate themselves finally to the "dustbin of history."

Ronald Bailey is a staff writer for Forbes.

How to Hang Protectionists

BY MARTIN MORSE WOOSTER

Boomerang, by Raymond Q. Armington and William Donahue Ellis
Chesterland, OH: Ward and Ward, 338 pages, $9.95 paper

One of the many problems of current American fiction is that characters have a restricted range of occupations. As Joe Queenan noted in a perceptive *American Spectator* article, the characters in most contemporary fiction are either self-employed, unemployed, or graduate students. The tensions and pleasures of the business world are largely ignored by modern novelists. John O'Hara, John P. Marquand, and James Gould Cozzens have no successors.

When I learned that *Boomerang* was a novel about capitalism, I was looking forward to it. When I discovered that the book takes on protectionism, I was prepared to enjoy it even more. One of my firmly rooted prejudices is that protectionists should be smited, denounced, horsewhipped, and flogged whenever possible. Unfortunately, *Boomerang* is a novel of ideas whose sound principles are buried in poor prose. Consider, for example, my favorite solecism, on page 232: "Boar's attention drifted long enough to note that the expression on the face of the worldly Jim Veitch for once betrayed naked wonder."

Boomerang does provide intermittent pleasure. Whenever the novel *directly* deals with business growth, it is enjoyable. So many of the businessmen portrayed in films and television shows are treated as con men, thugs, or vultures. Yet *Boomerang*, in a subplot that is one of the book's strengths, portrays engineer Jason Dart creating a new product that (brace yourself) helps people.

If *Boomerang* were primarily concerned with Dart's quest to market prefabricated housing, it would be a better book. Instead, the authors devote most of their novel to intrigues by reporters and members of Congress, two professions with which the authors seem to have had little contact. While Dart has some life, the other characters are all part of the walking dead.

Boomerang uses a technique pioneered by John Dos Passos in which bits of "reality"—in this case, newspaper clippings—are strewn throughout the text to add weight to the plot. But consider these "headlines" from *Boomerang*: "Three Senators Plan Far-Out 'War of Worlds' Demo for Senate" or " 'We Are Looking at Another Watts-Type Burning of Cities.' " From the text, it's hard to tell whether the authors ever read a newspaper or talked to a journalist.

Their treatment of Washington political life is equally implausible. For example, two farmers interrupt crucial testimony to listen to the farm report on a Chicago radio station. Chicago is nearly 1,000 miles from Washington. Even the strongest radio stations (such as WGN) can be heard only at night, and then only dimly. And while I've never tried to bring a radio into the Capitol, since the guards would no doubt confiscate it, I strongly suspect that its thick granite walls would block reception from stations distant enough actually to have farm reports.

Equally implausible is the book's climax. The beleaguered pro-free-trade forces in the Senate decide to create a computer simulation called "Boomerang," which shows the consequences of protectionist actions. The simulation is so convincing that the world is, at least temporarily, saved.

I hate to disappoint the authors, but dozens of computer simulations are held each year in Washington. Few have ever convinced any legislators to change their minds. Everyone, however, loves to play them.

As much as I agree with Armington and Ellis about the importance of protection-smashing, I can't recommend *Boomerang*. But if any REASON reader decides to hold a necktie party and hang protectionists in effigy, why not invite the authors? They—and I—would love to come.

Contributing Editor Martin Morse Wooster is REASON*'s Magazines columnist.*

BRICKBATS

Nobody was elected to the Jont Creek Water Improvement District Board in Arlie, Oregon, because nobody bothered to vote, including the five candidates. "I had work and other stuff on my mind, I guess. I just forgot," says candidate Thomas Bollene. "It was a bad day for me to vote," said another. You might think community leaders would wise up to the fact that since nobody was interested in voting, there's probably no need for a water district. But no such luck. The county will appoint directors for the district—again. Nobody voted two years ago, either.

While educators in some schools worry about students beating the daylights out of each other or their teachers, others have the opposite problem—students being *too* affectionate. To stop kids from hugging and kissing on school grounds, Principal Larry Graham of Pavilion Central School in rural New York imposed a rule forbidding "overt displays of affection beyond handholding." He said the behavior had become an embarrassment. When students protested, he assured them that hugging *will* be allowed when the home team wins.

Videotapes destined for the Cannes Film Festival almost didn't make it because customs inspectors at London's Heathrow International Airport deemed them pornographic. Officials didn't actually look at *Sex Talk* and *Tiger*, or they would have discovered that they were public service announcements meant to get pet owners to neuter their dogs and cats. One look at the titles—clearly marked on the package because of Cannes entry rules—convinced them to return the tapes to the Boston ad agency whence they came. According to an Associated Press report, Britain's customs watchdogs thought the messages on pet reproduction were "films of animal attraction."

"THERE—SEE HOW MUCH FASTER AND SMOOTHER IT GOES WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER?"

Give us you tired, your poor—but don't try to operate a video arcade in Rocky River, Ohio. The city council voted to drop an ordinance that allows only U.S. citizens to run game parlors. But Mayor Earl Martin didn't want foreigners corrupting local youth with their Space Invaders and Pac Man games. That's a job for Americans! He vetoed the measure. "We just want someone in charge who knows what the laws are," Martin said. "We don't expect a foreigner to know and defend these laws. They have taken no oath to the Constitution."

If they won't let you sell liquor, give it away. That's how Arnold Kaye is getting revenge on officials in Westport, Connecticut, who won't grant him a liquor license because his store is within 1,500 feet of an establishment that already has a license. In the delicatessen part of Kaye's store, customers can buy beer but can't drink it there; and in the restaurant part, they can bring in their own beer and wine. But they can't buy beer in the delicatessen and drink it in the restaurant. Kaye got fed up with the silly rules and started giving away beer and wine by the case. So far, that's not illegal. "I want to be able to enjoy freedom of competition," he says. "It's like the Boston Tea Party."

Wither Fido in the hereafter? Under Vermont law, animal carcasses are considered solid waste and should be incinerated or tossed in an approved landfill. But when state inspectors ordered a veterinary clinic to clean up a pit that it had been using to bury dead pets, someone pointed out that the state wildlife department has 40 such pits for deer, moose, and other "road kills." Somehow that's different. "Animals have been dying in the woods of Vermont for centuries," says Chief Warden Roger Whitcomb. "They're part of the food chain." State officials are writing a loophole only for themselves, but also promise not to go after homeowners who give Fluffy the Cat a shoebox funeral in the backyard.

—Mark Edward Crane

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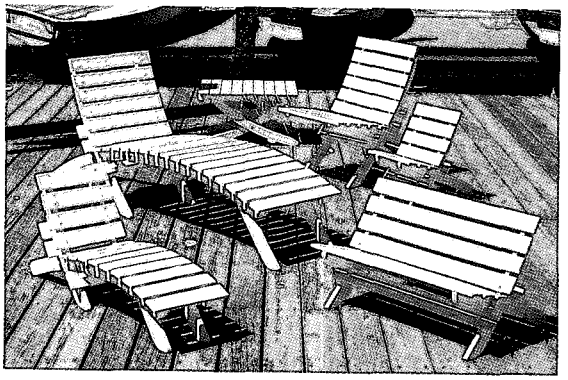
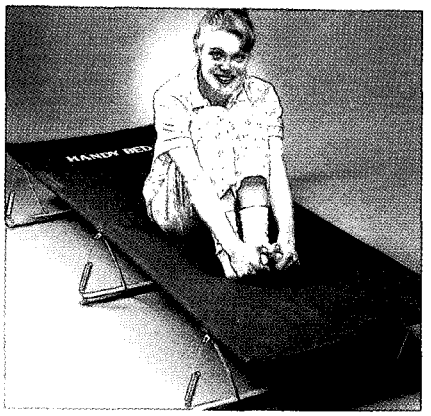
▼ BAY BREAKER™: FURNITURE WHOSE TIME HAS COME

The beautiful Bay Breaker Collection™ is constructed of poplar, a durable and attractive hardwood. Each piece is beautifully crafted and painted with lead-free, non-toxic high gloss white enamel. The finish not only looks great, but resists chips, cracks, abrasions, and the effects of tanning oils, sun, salt, moisture and temperature changes—so it will keep on looking great year after year. Each Bay Breaker™ piece is constructed to offer maximum comfort and support. Each one is perfect for relaxing and entertaining and will be perfect on the deck, patio, boat, terrace, or even indoors. We are offering the Bay Chair (28" h x 19" w x 39" d) **$64.98** ($12.00) #A1919; Bay Lounge (20" x 12" x 36") **$99.98** ($16.00) #A1920; Child's Chair (20" x 12" x 24") **$48.98** ($12.00) #A1921; Child's Bench (20" x 30" x 24") **$64.98** ($12.00) #A1922; Hi-Lo Cocktail Table (18" [14"] x 19" x 30") **$69.98** ($11.00) #A1923.



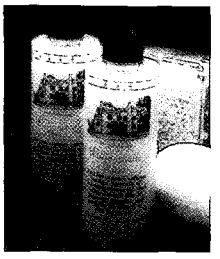
▼ THE MAGICAL SPARE BED

It's almost like pulling an extra bed out of a hat. Unlike most spare beds that gobble up storage space and are unwieldy to move, this one rolls down to fit a 36"-long, 3"-diameter canvas case, to stash in a closet corner, car trunk, camper, anywhere. Yet it unrolls in minutes to a full-size 27" x 73" bed that will even accommodate 6-footers, supports up to 500 pounds and is comfortable to boot. The secret's in the inventive construction: a cotton canvas sling is supported on laminated steel legs with 6 steel springs for cushioning and stability on rough ground. Toss the carrying strap over your shoulder and go — camping, beach, poolside; the 10" legs keep it off damp ground and sand. Of course, this bed is indispensable at home, country home, dorm — even for kids in motel rooms. A superb value at **$54.98** ($12.00) #A1912.



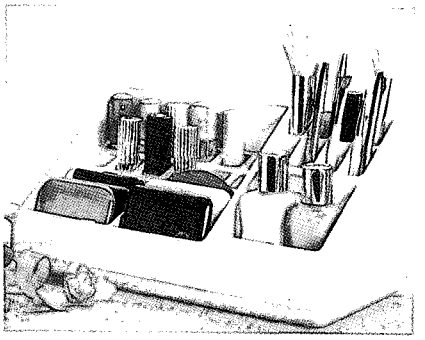
▼ FOOD FOR WOOD

Most of the convenience waxes you buy actually dry out wood instead of nourishing it. What's the alternative? Our choice is Williamsville Wax. It is made of beeswax and lemon oil, heat-blended with other natural oils. It can be used on any type of wood, any type of finish, on paneling or kitchen cabinets as well as fine furniture. Williamsville Wax is super for restoring neglected or mistreated wood. Two 8-oz. bottles cost **$13.98** ($3.25) #A14312.



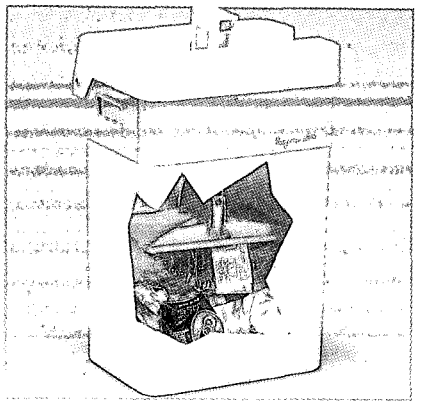
▼ A COSMETIC ORGANIZER THAT REALLY WORKS!!

This cosmetic organizer is the best we've seen. Created by Organizational Specialist Reina Alexis Barone™, this attractive, efficient organizer is designed to showcase fine cosmetics on top of dressing table or vanity to enhance any room decor. Holds up to 40 different cosmetic items. Made in the USA. Measures 12" x 6", scratch resistant. ABS plastic with a high gloss finish and non skid, non scratch base. **$27.98** ($5.00) #A1928.



▼ GOBBLE YOUR GARBAGE WITH A COMPAC™ TRASH COMPACTOR

The garbage crunch is upon us. So—no house should be without the all new Compac™—the world's first manual trash compactor. So easy to use—just pull, lift, and push! Trash is mashed to 1/5 of original size. It measures only 19½" x 12½" x 9½"—yet it holds 2 to 3 times as much as standard cans. No need to buy special bags—the Compac™ uses standard 8, 10 or 13 gallon bags. So compact, it's perfect for kitchens and bathrooms, boats and motor homes. Sleek attractive design, but tough polyprothalene construction makes it withstand bending and cracking. Available in 3 colors: **$34.98** ($7.00) White/Blue: #A1913; All White: #A1914; White/Red: #A1915.



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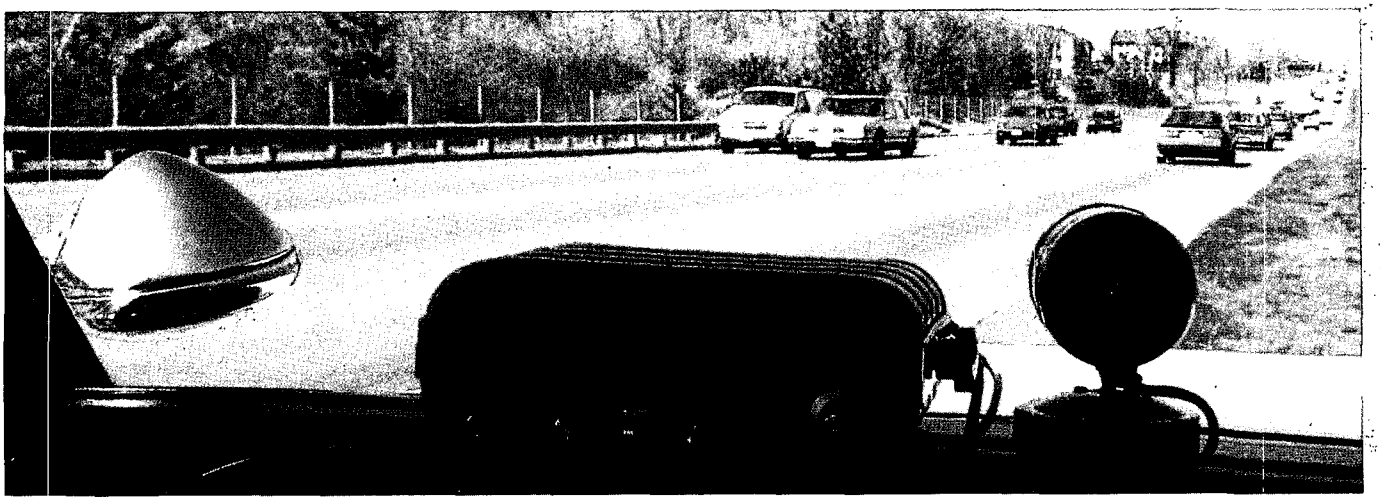

Traffic radar doesn't say which car is being clocked, it merely flashes a number. The radar operator must then try to determine which vehicle produced the reading.

Why radar makes mistakes. How to protect yourself.

Although nine different errors have been documented for traffic radar, the most common source of wrongful tickets is mistaken identity.

It's hard to believe, but traffic radar does not identify which vehicle is responsible for the speed being displayed. It shows only a speed number and nothing else. The radar operator must decide who is to blame.

How radar works

The radar gun is aimed at traffic and it transmits a beam of invisible radar waves. Each moving object within range reflects these invisible waves back to the radar gun. Using the Doppler principle, the radar calculates speed from the reflected waves.

Traffic radar is blind

Traffic radar works differently from military, air-traffic-control, and weather radars. The others use rotating dish antennas in order to track many objects simultaneously.

Traffic radar uses a far smaller, far cheaper, gun-shaped antenna. This simplification requires traffic radar to ignore all reflections but the strongest. The number displayed is speed calculated from the strongest reflection.

The best guess

Remember, these reflections are invisible. Truck reflections can be ten times stronger than car reflections. How can the operator know for sure which vehicle is responsible for the number?

The truth is, he can't be sure in many cases. The result is mistaken identity. You can be ticketed for somebody else's reflection.

Self defense

The only way to defend yourself against these wrongful tickets is to know when radar is operating near you. Others agree with this method. In his verdict upholding a citizen's right to use a radar detector, Judge Joseph Ryan, Superior Court, District of Columbia, wrote:

"If government seeks to use clandestine and furtive methods to monitor citizen actions, it can ill afford to complain should the citizen insist on a method to effect his right to know he is under such surveillance."

We can help

We specialize in radar warning. And Escort and Passport do far more than simply find radar. Upon radar contact, the alert lamp responds and the meter shows radar signal strength. At the same time, you will hear an audio warning —pulsing slowly when the radar is weak, quicker as it strengthens, then constant as you approach close range. When you know exactly how strong the radar waves are, you'll know when the radar unit is near enough to actually have you under surveillance.

Expert's Choice

Escort and Passport are the most effective radar-warning instruments available. But don't take our word for it. *Car and Driver, Popular Mechanics* and *Roundel* magazines have each published independent tests of radar detectors. And each gave us the highest ratings. Just call us toll-free and we'll send reprints of the complete tests, not just excerpts or quotes.

We're as close as your phone

We sell directly to you, and we guarantee your satisfaction. If you're not entirely satisfied within 30 days, return your purchase. We'll refund your money and shipping costs.

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Call now, and the best defense against wrongful tickets can be in your car tomorrow.

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